CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.854
6 July 2000

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 6 July 2000, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Celso Amorim (Brazil)

GE.00-62102 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 854th plenary meeting of the Conference.

(continued in French)

The Permanent Mission of France to the Conference has informed us of the sudden death of Mr. François Rhein. Mr. Rhein served as Counsellor with the Permanent Mission of France from 1996 to 1999, during which years his skill, his background knowledge and his personal qualities were appreciated by us one and all. I am sure that you will wish to join me in asking Ambassador de la Fortelle to convey to the family of the deceased our deepest sympathy and our sincere condolences.

(continued in English)

I should now like to extend a warm welcome to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, who is attending the plenary meeting today despite his heavy involvement in the current session of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. His presence among us yet again today testifies to his abiding interest in the future of this Conference.

There is no speaker inscribed on my list for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? South Africa has the floor.

Mr. MARKRAM (South Africa): Mr. President, at the outset may I congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is a rare occasion that the Conference has the privilege of the same distinguished Ambassador presiding over its work twice. My delegation is convinced that Brazil will build upon the diligent and untiring efforts of Ambassador Lint of Belgium and that your ample experience may guide us through this difficult period in the Conference on Disarmament.

I have asked for the floor to recall a media statement on the decision to destroy South Africa's redundant stockpile of small arms, which was circulated as document CD/1573 on 4 March 1999, and to inform the Conference that the physical destruction of the South African National Defence Force's stockpile of redundant small arms and spare parts has commenced today.

In a continent where recent conflicts have mainly been fought with small arms and light weapons and many of these weapons acquired from surplus stockpiles elsewhere, the destruction of over a quarter million redundant small arms forms part of the Government's comprehensive strategy to prevent, combat and eradicate the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms. An integral part of this strategy is to destroy such redundant and obsolete weapons rather than selling them, as an important preventative measure. These weapons became redundant because of the availability of more advanced technology, or were confiscated by the South African National Defence Force during military operations.

(Mr. Markram, South Africa)

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Norway for its cooperation and generous assistance, which made it possible to undertake the destruction of these weapons.

I have circulated with this statement a copy taken from a media statement to be issued in South Africa today, outlining the technical details of the destruction process. It would be appreciated if the text of that statement could be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Chile has asked for the floor. I give the floor to Chile.

Ms. CHAHÍN (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, the delegation of Chile, on behalf of which it has been my honour to speak during the current session, wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It does so, furthermore, with the fellow feeling that a sister country like Brazil merits, a country which we hold close to our heart and with which we share not only interests but also our aspiration for a better and safer world, in which democracy shall prevail and human rights shall be properly respected.

We wish you the very best of success and we undertake to give you all our support in the conduct of your work.

We would also like to inform the Conference on Disarmament that the National Congress of the Republic of Chile has finalized the constitutional procedures for the approval of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, which we shall finally be ratifying in the near future.

In this manner, we reaffirm our unswerving commitment to the cause of disarmament and international security, which we regard not as ends in themselves but as instruments placed at the service of humankind, of people, who represent the guiding principle behind our Government's policies.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Chile for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

(continued in English)

I want also to thank the representative of South Africa for his generous references to me. I do not see any other request for the floor. If that is so, let me also make some opening remarks with regard to my presidency.

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to the strenuous efforts of my friend, Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium, as well as of the other colleagues who have assumed this high office this year, in trying to bridge the differences that still prevent us from agreeing on a programme of work. Their full commitment notwithstanding, this Conference has been unable,

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after 16 weeks in session, to embark on any substantive work. This is certainly not a time for long statements. The short number - and sometimes even the absence - of statements in our meetings is testimony to the current mood in this forum. Although the Conference on Disarmament has lived through other "identity crises", the present one appears to be more serious. Overcoming it will require a new sense of engagement.

Ambassador Lint has generously recalled that this is the second time I have served at the helm of the Conference. I do not know if this is a sign of bureaucratic longevity or is due to some other fortuitous circumstances. I can assure you, however, and especially the many young delegates with a promising career in disarmament, that I do not intend to benefit from this privilege when, in the next decade, Brazil's turn to preside over this august body comes round once again.

In January 1993, I had just come from Paris where I had signed the Chemical Weapons Convention on behalf of my Government. That was an unprecedented, remarkable agreement - the first, as we all know, to proscribe an entire category of weapons of mass destruction in a comprehensive and verifiable manner.

Only two days after the opening of the 1993 session, we were able to agree on the agenda and on the establishment of four ad hoc committees. During that month, the Conference on Disarmament was able to produce a consensus document with comments on the United Nations Secretary-General's report entitled "New Dimensions of Arms Regulation and Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era".

Certainly, in the early 1990s, the window of opportunity generated by the end of bipolar confrontation still seemed wide open. The Conference on Disarmament succeeded in taking advantage of that favourable context and advanced some important agreements. The prevailing atmosphere was, incidentally, reflected in the document which contained the Conference's reaction to Dr. Boutros-Ghali's reports: "The new conditions of international security reinforce the relevance of disarmament and arms regulation, because they facilitate the conclusion of new bilateral and multilateral agreements that would establish and codify security at lower levels of armaments".

Ours is a different political environment, and many concerns have been expressed over policies, actions or, in some cases, lack of action by important actors. My own Government, in statements made at this Conference, was among those which expressed frustration in the face of this reversal of the positive momentum. While progress was achieved bilaterally or unilaterally, there were clear setbacks which have had a significant impact on the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In my view, two considerations must be borne in mind in relation to how we could and should deal with the current deadlock in the Conference.

First, it is imperative that we build upon recent political steps, which are particularly meaningful for this forum. For the first time, at the NPT Review Conference, the five

(The President)

nuclear-weapon States assumed an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. A specific and detailed programme of action was set up, comprising previously agreed steps and a number of new ones, thus providing for a checklist against which progress can be measured in the coming years. Among these, it is noteworthy that the Conference on Disarmament was called upon to establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament.

This important political message must be translated into urgent action. The groundbreaking commitments, the spirit of compromise and the sense of responsibility towards the future of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation must be pursued here as well as in other places. This certainly requires concerted high-level attention to the current logjam faced by this Conference.

Such attention, however, seems to be lacking.

The continued paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament cannot but cast doubt over the value of progress achieved elsewhere. For reasons that may be understandable, yet not necessarily justifiable, breaking the impasse in the Conference does not seem to enjoy the same degree of priority as avoiding failure in other disarmament-related events.

This, I would contend, is a mistake.

If the main multilateral negotiating body remains paralysed, the very same forces, whose unleashing was feared, will be operating. Confidence in the future of disarmament and non-proliferation will be eroded.

Second, the Conference on Disarmament will naturally continue to be influenced by and responsive to developments on the international strategic scene which affect the security interests of individual member States. It would be naive to think otherwise. But the Conference on Disarmament does not have a passive role only. This is a dialectical relationship. If the Conference is capable of initiating meaningful work, it will to some degree have a positive influence on policies, decisions and developments outside its framework.

Much time has been spent on the question of the negotiating nature of certain mandates. I do not mean to underestimate the weight of some words and the commitment they may imply. But, as is often recalled, the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body. Any issue being discussed has to be seen in that light. Substantive discussions in the Conference do not of necessity entail immediate negotiations, in the sense of treaty-making. Nor should they be viewed as precluding such negotiations. Often, the preparation of the conceptual and technical groundwork made possible by in-depth discussions is in itself pre-negotiation.

I outline these thoughts without any illusion as to the difficulties of reaching compromise solutions when vital security issues are involved. But most of us here have been witness to other situations, here or in other forums, in which, in spite of crucial, substantive divergences, it was possible to "organize differences" in a way that did not prevent equally important goals, which

(The President)

were held in common, from being obtained. The real question which we face is this: is it or is it not true that, in spite of our diverging priorities and concerns, we all share the same vested interest in reinforcing the multilateral machinery for disarmament and non-proliferation? And, if this is the case, how far are we prepared to go in displaying the necessary flexibility to allow for constructive solutions that do not jeopardize perceived vital interests?

As with the characters in a Chekhov play, whose lives wither away in front of us, in the midst of a sense of powerlessness and lost hopes, the substance and spirit of the Conference on Disarmament are on the decline.

As in many other diplomatic processes, or in life itself, it is not always easy to pinpoint the moment in which deterioration becomes irreversible. Although many concerns have been expressed on the paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament, a sense of crisis and, therefore, of urgency is not clearly perceptible.

It is incumbent on the members of this body to act, if necessary by raising the level of attention to the situation of the Conference on Disarmament in their own capitals. Given existing differences, it is only from an acute perception of such crisis, and the risks it carries for disarmament and non-proliferation, that solutions may be found to our problems. It is our hope that full use will be made of the inter-sessional period ahead of us for thorough reflection on this situation, as well as for contacts and consultations, so that, when we reconvene in August, we may be closer to an agreement on our programme of work.

You can be assured that, for my part, I will spare no effort to promote real and meaningful progress towards that end. I need hardly emphasize that the Presidency will be available at all times for consultations. Any constructive advice will, of course, be most welcome.

This concludes our business for today and the second part of our annual session. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 10 August 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.855
10 August 2000

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 10 August 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Celso Amorim (Brazil)

GE.00-62916 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 855th plenary meeting of the Conference and the third and last part of our 2000 session.

There is no speaker inscribed on my list for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? I see none. That is probably the most eloquent comment one can make on the state of our work in the Conference on Disarmament.

Since there is no delegation wishing to take the floor, I would very briefly like to say that I have been continuing consultations aimed at trying to find a solution for our programme of work. I have spoken at some length with the different groups, and I also gave clear indications yesterday in the presidential consultations as to the direction which I am trying to follow.

I am, let us say, moderately encouraged by the reaction I had, although I am also fully aware of the constraints that we face at this moment, constraints that come from the hard realities - or at least the perceived hard realities - of the outside world, as well as time constraints. But I think it is my duty as President of this body to continue trying and, if possible come to a conclusion, if not, at least leave some valuable contribution for my successor and my successor's successor.

This, therefore, has been the general thrust of my work, as you already know, having heard directly from me in the groups. I also take note from the presidential consultations yesterday - and also from some members who have approached me or from reactions expressed in the groups that I have heard - that, in order to have more specific reactions, at some point a text would be useful, even if it is a kind of work-in-progress. I take note of all these comments.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 17 August 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.856
17 August 2000

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 August 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Celso Amorim (Brazil)

GE.00-63057 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 856th plenary meeting of the Conference.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Kazakhstan and Romania. I give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan, Ambassador Nurlan Danenov.

Mr. DANENOV (Kazakhstan) (translated from Russian): Sir, first allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. It is our hope that your experience and dynamic approach will play an important role in moving our work forward and the delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan would like to assure you of its full support in your efforts here in the Conference.

I would also like to note the untiring efforts of the Secretary-General of the Conference and the personal representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Petrovsky and his deputy, Mr. Adelkader Bensmail, in keeping the work of the Conference on track.

Until now I have refrained from taking the floor before my distinguished colleagues in the Conference on Disarmament. In doing so I was abiding by an Eastern tradition. The essence of that tradition is that when people get together in order to discuss any problem or to exchange views on a particular issue, the newcomer is obliged first to listen to the views of the more senior and more experienced speakers before saying his piece. I believe that was a sound and worthwhile decision on my part. Within this representative forum we have heard a wealth of useful information, analysis and proposals provided by the distinguished ambassadors; all matters worthy of our careful attention and study.

Unfortunately, when we took up their consideration we were unable to reach consensus and these constructive ideas were never implemented in practice. On the one hand, this raised a host of entirely understandable questions and, on the other, it also bore out the incontrovertible fact that it is very difficult to overcome accretions of distrust, to relinquish stereotypes and inertia in one's thought processes. Clearly, in the twenty-first century, progress towards a safer, more stable world will remain one of the most complex and responsible tasks facing the international community.

At this meeting, I have a fairly modest task to perform: I would like to draw the attention of delegations here in the Conference to the fact that, on 29 July 2000 in the former Semipalatinsk testing ground in the Degelen mountains an explosion was conducted of 100 metric tons of granulotol resulting in the destruction of the last horizontal tunnel intended for nuclear weapons tests.

This was the third in the series of Kazakh-United States calibrating experiments conducted at the test site.

At the same time as destroying the horizontal tunnel, the experimental explosion was used to test and calibrate the international nuclear test monitoring system under the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, to which the Republic of Kazakhstan is also a party.

(Mr. Danenov, Kazakhstan)

The information gained from these experiments will enable the international community to detect and more accurately identify nuclear explosions, (distinguishing them from earthquakes and explosions using conventional explosives) and thereby ensure effective monitoring of compliance with the provisions of CTBT and to set in place the sort of monitoring systems which would make it impossible for nuclear weapons to be tested anywhere in the world without the international community finding out about them.

The "Omega-3" experiment is of special significance as it has successfully rounded off the five-year programme to eliminate the whole infrastructure for nuclear-weapons testing, comprising the closure of the horizontal tunnels and the destruction of the vertical shafts at the Semipalatinsk test site.

On 2 August 2000 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan issued a statement, the text of which I have handed to the Secretary of the Conference requesting that it be published as an official document of the Conference.

The closure of the Semipalatinsk test site and Kazakhstan's renunciation of all forms of nuclear weapons represented a natural choice for a country which has suffered so much from nuclear-weapons testing.

Allow me to remind the members of the Conference that Kazakhstan demonstrated its commitment to the task of ridding the world of its nuclear weapons by acceding in December 1993 to NPT as a non-nuclear State. Recognizing the urgent need for a comprehensive strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, in 1996 Kazakhstan signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.

Completion of the above-mentioned programme has yet again emphatically demonstrated to the world Kazakhstan's readiness to abide firmly by its international obligations and to play a practical role in enhancing the monitoring of compliance with the provisions of CTBT.

The admission of the Republic of Kazakhstan one year ago as a member of the Conference on Disarmament was seen by us as a clear sign of approval by the international community of the responsible position taken by our country in the field of disarmament and a reflection of our involvement in the process of ridding mankind of the nuclear threat.

In 1999 and during the 2000 session of the Conference, much concern has been expressed at the state of affairs here in the Conference. Some very specific proposals have been made in respect of the programme of work and attempts have been made to get our work back on track. We support these efforts and it is our hope that in the very near future the Conference will be able to start discussing some of its substantive issues. We must be ready for this event and it would therefore make sense to begin work immediately on some of the more urgent issues without focusing exclusively on any one of them, however important it might be.

(Mr. Danenov, Kazakhstan)

In May 1998, here in this Conference, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kassymzhomart Tokaev, set out the position of our country with regard to all aspects of the strengthening of global and regional security. I would now just like to note the following.

- Kazakhstan would like to see a negotiating process start as soon as possible on the agenda of this forum. In this connection, we support the proposals which have already been made by a number of distinguished heads of delegation on the creation of subsidiary bodies on such items of the Conference's agenda as "Cessation of the arms race and nuclear disarmament", "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" and "Prohibition of the production of fissile material". This was also stressed by the head of the Kazakh delegation at the New York NPT conference in April 2000.

- In addition, we believe that the NPT Treaty is the sole multilateral nuclear arms control agreement which binds all States to undertake the necessary measures to achieve nuclear disarmament. The problems of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are interdependent, necessitating joint efforts by both nuclear and non-nuclear States to strengthen international security. We should here recall the special responsibility of the States in the nuclear club and the constructive position they have adopted in the Conference. The commitment of these States to the policy of nuclear disarmament should be given substance by specific convincing action. Only if that were to occur could we hope for a gradual strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

- Exceptional importance attaches to the continuation of the disarmament process, which to a great extent depends on the political will and the desire of all countries to pursue the search for constructive and mutually acceptable solutions relating, above all, to the entry into force of CTBT and the elaboration of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

- Time has shown that, notwithstanding the existence of multilateral treaties, the international arms control regime is very vulnerable. The slightest change in the prevailing international balance and stability could jeopardize the effectiveness of the international arms control regime as a whole.

The situation surrounding the ABM Treaty is therefore a matter of considerable concern, since for many years the ABM Treaty has underpinned the relative balance and stability in the world and has played a decisive role in curbing the arms race. For that reason, safeguarding the integrity of the Treaty and strict compliance with its provisions constitute an essential condition for the process of disarmament and the further reduction of strategic weapons, as stressed in the declaration of heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 21 June 2000 and the declaration, on 6 July 2000, of heads of State of the Shanghai Five, which includes Kazakhstan.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the international community - already buffeted by various local wars, conflicts and acts of international terrorism - may well now also

(Mr. Danenov, Kazakhstan)

face the possible emergence of new nuclear threats. How ready are we today to make a thorough assessment of the nature and scale of these threats? To what extent can they be averted through bilateral and regional cooperation?

Faced with issues like this, we must also give careful thought to the advisability of preventive measures in respect of new threats, including in the context of preventing the use of nuclear materials for terrorist purposes.

It might be useful to keep in mind these particular concerns of States and peoples when pursuing further discussion in the Conference on Disarmament on the means of guaranteeing a safer and more stable world and global security and setting in place and strengthening the necessary international machinery for that purpose.

To conclude this statement, I would like to say the following.

Every year the resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly confirm the priority of nuclear disarmament issues. It goes without saying that, without specific action in this field, we cannot achieve the aims set before us.

Protracted discussion on the programme of work and the consequent stalling of this process have clearly detracted from the stature of the Conference on Disarmament as the international multilateral disarmament forum.

We understand that the Conference is trying to strike a balance between the national and multilateral efforts of States in order to ensure nuclear security. It is on the practical success of our efforts in this direction that our collective security depends.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Kazakhstan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, Ambassador Ioan Maxim.

Mr. MAXIM (Romania): Mr. President, allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you most sincerely on your assumption of the important office of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in your endeavours. I would also like to express my special appreciation to your predecessors for the intense efforts they made to move the Conference forward to substantive work.

I have asked for the floor in my personal capacity, as I am about to relinquish my post as head of the Romanian delegation to the Conference on Disarmament after two years during which our hopes to see this international body live up to its responsibilities as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and international security have remained unfulfilled.

(Mr. Maxim, Romania)

While it is not my intention on this occasion to embark on a deep analysis of the present stalemate of the Conference, regrettably prolonged even after the successful conclusion of the NPT Review Conference, I would like to express some views on the need to change the course of the present situation in the Conference on Disarmament.

First, let me say that I share the views of other distinguished speakers that the time has come to examine in depth and discuss openly the present state of affairs in the Conference, in order to retain those options that will allow it to resume its substantive work both in the short and in the long term. Such an approach is perhaps more necessary at a time when one major item on which agreement exists - negotiations on FMCT - is predicated on the consensus solution of other contentious items.

For my delegation, starting negotiations on FMCT, while continuing the search for an agreed solution to the contentious items, facilitated by the positive contributions and flexibility of the most concerned delegations, remains a priority in the Conference on Disarmament.

Second, allow me to express the view that a continuation of the present state of affairs in the Conference might adversely affect other items in the programme of work on which agreement exists, with the emergence of new global and specific national security perceptions and concerns relating to developments in the international security environment. At the same time, prior experience has shown that items pertaining initially to the Conference on Disarmament have been approached, negotiated and settled in other forums and formats, thereby reducing the Conference's credibility.

In order to prevent such an outcome, as well as to be able to assess and improve awareness of possible developments in the areas covered by the generally agreed items, I share the view that the Conference on Disarmament should resume the substantive activity of its subsidiary bodies, thus enabling the Conference to resume its role as an active and valid instrument for the positive influence of the international security climate. Seeing the Conference on Disarmament only as a barometer of the state of international security is an expression of passivity and resignation which has proved of limited practical value for the cause of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons, an ideal to which our authorities and peoples are genuinely committed.

Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to his able deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, to all the members of the secretariat and the interpreters, as well as to all our colleagues for their valuable help, cooperation and friendship. It has been a privilege and a very special experience to have participated in the deliberations of the Conference.

I give you all my very best wishes and my hopes that the Conference will be able to embark without further delay on its substantive work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Romania for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I am sure that you all join me in extending to Ambassador Maxim and his family our best wishes for the future.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case. I would just like to say a few words.

At our plenary meeting last Thursday, I informed you of my efforts to build consensus on the programme of work of the Conference. Subsequently, I have presented my ideas in a very precise way to all groups and members. You are all aware of them. Yesterday's presidential consultations revealed that those ideas enjoyed wide support as a basis - and I stress, as a basis - for a process of intensified consultations with a view to reaching consensus on a programme of work. There was no negative reply to the specific question I presented. I therefore feel encouraged to intensify my efforts in the coming days with a view to further strengthening this positive trend and arriving at a satisfactory conclusion to our joint endeavours.

Of course, I am keenly aware that time is running out and I shall keep members apprised of my intentions.

The next plenary meeting for the Conference, and the last under my presidency, will be held on Thursday, 24 August 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.857
24 August 2000

Original: ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 24 August 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Celso Amorim (Brazil)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 857th plenary meeting of the Conference.

Distinguished delegates, we have learned with deep sorrow the tragic death of the crew members of the Russian nuclear submarine Kursk. I am sure that you all join me in extending our deep sympathy and condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation on this sad occasion. I would kindly request our Russian colleague to convey these sentiments to his Government and to the bereaved families, as well as to the whole Russian people.

I should like to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of all of us, to the new representative of Romania, Ambassador Anda-Cristina Filip and assure her of our full cooperation and support.

There is no speaker inscribed on my list for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? Japan, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. NORBURU (Japan): With your indulgence, Mr. President, I should like to take this opportunity to mention briefly how much our delegation appreciates all the efforts being made by our Brazilian President to reach an agreement on the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. At the same time, we must also express our sincere recognition of his predecessors, whose efforts were also most worthy of note.

Ambassador Amorim has already eloquently demonstrated how far a President can push all delegations forward in seeking a solution to the apparently impossible problem faced by the Conference on Disarmament. Ambassador Amorim has been conducting this task with perseverance, wisdom and diplomatic skills which my delegation highly esteems, and his work will stand as a textbook case of good chairmanship. What Ambassador Amorim has been able to achieve so far is remarkable, and we must all be very grateful that he intends to continue working until the last moment.

Mr. President, it may be easy for people like us who are constantly exposed to the difficulties of international relations to understand why we have not yet been able to make progress in the Conference on Disarmament. This may not, however, hold true for the rest of society outside our diplomatic realm, who are diligently watching us and expecting real outcomes from us. This is reason enough for us not to abandon the possibility of agreeing on a programme of work, even at this late stage of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. We must carry on with the work this week and during the remaining four weeks of this session.

Mr. President, many delegations, including mine, consider extremely important all the efforts being made to accomplish progress in nuclear disarmament as the pivotal foreign policy objective, be it FMCT or a general discussion on nuclear disarmament. Over the last two years we have experienced an uncomfortable ambience of uncertainty in the Conference on Disarmament, but my delegation takes some solace from the fact that under you, Mr. President, we are still trying to be upbeat in our efforts to bring an end to this troubling reality.

The PRESIDENT: I thank very much the representative of Japan. I am really moved by his words and encouraged to try to come to an agreement in this which is the last leg of my presidency.

Is there any other delegation which wants to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

As you are aware, during the last few days, I have intensified consultations aimed at promoting consensus on the Programme of Work of the Conference on the basis of the ideas which I presented to all of you. I am encouraged by the fact that all delegations considered those ideas as a basis for further intensified consultations. I take the point made yesterday by several distinguished ambassadors that, at this stage, a basis for further intensified consultations is not good enough. I shall revert to this item later.

I convened informal open-ended consultations yesterday with the purpose of ascertaining whether further progress can be made on a consensus decision on the Programme of Work. I was pleased to see that there was wide support from a broad cross-section of nations from different regions, different geopolitical situations, to my efforts, and I was also pleased to see the readiness displayed by all delegations to work towards compromise. Therefore, as I announced yesterday in the presidential consultations, it is my intention to suspend this plenary meeting and to convene in 10 minutes an informal open-ended consultation to discuss the ideas I have been working on.

But before doing so, if you allow me a lighter note, I will mention to you that a friend of mine, who is actually our Ambassador in South Africa, recently gave me an old book called "Legends of the United Nations". It was a collection by I believe a British author, Frances Frost, of legends of almost all the nations that were then comprising the United Nations written just after the Charter was approved in San Francisco. One of the legends that came across to me, which I think is especially significant to what we are living today (and I will not mention the country from where the legend is in order not to be misinterpreted in my purpose in mentioning the legend). It goes more or less as follows: Once upon a time there was a king and a princess, and the king wanted the princess - a very beautiful princess - to get married, but the condition was that the suitor should bring a blue rose. Well, a blue rose does not exist. So there were several suitors, merchants, warriors and others, and they tried different solutions. One brought a beautiful crystal ball with a blue rose inscribed in it. Another one tried a silk rose. Another one tried just to dye, to use a blue dye in a white rose, so that also he could be accepted. But of course none of these tricks was accepted. But in the end there was another one who came with a white rose. He just plucked a white rose and brought it to the palace. The king and the princess considered the suitor and thought that he was a worthy gentleman and that the marriage could be a good one, so the king and the princess, to the astonishment of all those who were present, said: "Well, here we have a blue rose". And they lived happily ever after.

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: We resume our formal meeting. We have just failed in approving a Programme of Work for the CD. There is nothing extraordinary about this. This has actually been the pattern for several months and years. Failure is apparently now part of our routine. We all have to reflect on the causes of it and how to overcome it.

I do not think this is the appropriate time to draw lessons. Certainly, in my case, any analysis that I would try now would be tinged with a sense of personal frustration and emotions are not good counsellors for rational thinking. I may come back to that sometime in the future from the bench of Brazil. I do not need to explain either the gist of my efforts, how I tried to explore ambiguities in a positive way, how I tried to test the limits of the possible. My text will speak for itself, with its possible merits and obvious shortcomings. I am asking the secretariat to circulate it as a CD document, not because I am under any illusion that what was considered as a basis in the last days will still be a basis in four or five months' time, but I thought in any case it would be useful to have that text as part of our records to show the general direction of the efforts we made collectively. At least it will demonstrate we did not give up easily.

As to the future of the CD, it is under great doubt. The CD is a tool, and a tool that is not used gets rusted. Will it be a tragedy if, as some have already even mentioned here, the CD disappears? I honestly do not know. Whatever will be deemed collectively indispensable by those who detain the power of destruction and annihilation will be done bilaterally, trilaterally, plurilaterally. But for those of us who rely on multilateralism, on the power of rational persuasion, and do not dispose in the same proportion - either because they cannot or do not want to have the force of arms, actual or potential - there will be a great loss. The system of world governance, if I may use that word in a vital area such as security, will be tremendously impoverished. I hope it is not too late to prevent that from happening.

There is a positive side to those efforts that we all undertook, despite the fact that they did not succeed: the way we worked together, trying to look for reasons to be optimists in the midst of so many factors is encouraging. Clearly - and this was the case yesterday and today in the informal meetings - I received from a cross-section of the membership great support not only for my efforts but also for my proposal as a basis for a consensus. And even from the others, who could not at least explicitly join these expressions, I received loyal, faithful support, and I am glad that they were able to agree that my non-paper was a basis for further consultations.

This engagement, which existed all along, shows that cynicism and unreasoned pessimism have not, or at least not yet, taken over the CD. I would like in this connection to quote from Amartya Sen, the famous Nobel Prize winner's recent essay in the New York Review of Books: "Unreasoned pessimism masquerading as composure based on realism and common sense can serve to 'justify' disastrous inaction and an abdication of public responsibility". Let us not succumb to it.

Finally, I wish to express once again my sincere appreciation for the invaluable support I received from Group Coordinators, as well as all other colleagues and their respective delegations, through these actually two months of presidency. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General of the CD, Mr. Petrovsky, and his deputy, Mr. Bensmail, for the way in which

(The President)

they put at my disposal their vast experience and expertise. I also want to thank the staff of the CD, as well as the interpreters. Finally, I am deeply indebted to my collaborators for their hard work and advice and, more importantly, the optimism they shared with me in the course of the Brazilian presidency of the CD.

The Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Thank you, Mr. President. I have asked for the floor to thank you for your words of condolence on the occasion of the tragedy that struck the Russian nuclear submarine Kursk. Your condolences will be conveyed to the Russian Government and to the families of the crew members.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. No other requests for the floor?

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 31 August 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.857/Corr.1
22 September 2000

ENGLISH
Original: ENGLISH, RUSSIAN
and SPANISH ONLY

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 24 August 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

Corrigendum

Page 2, paragraph 5:

The speaker for the Japanese delegation should read "Mr. Yamaguchi".

GE.00-63434 (E)

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.858
31 August 2000

Original: ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 31 August 2000, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Petko Draganov (Bulgaria)

GE.00-63309 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 858th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At this point I would like to make a few opening remarks. It is a special honour for me to assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I represent a country that is party to all major multilateral agreements on arms control and which has been a member of this august body since its inception. Bulgaria regards international arms control and disarmament as a priority in terms of its national security doctrine. Thus, my Government has a vested national interest in the work of this Conference and I can assure you of my delegation's total commitment in carrying out its important assignment.

At the outset, let me pay tribute to my predecessors, Ambassadors Harald Kreid of Austria, Iftekhar Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Sergei Martynov of Belarus, Jean Lint of Belgium and Celso Amorim of Brazil. They have guided this Conference with tireless effort and skilled diplomacy through what has been another year of doubt and, sometimes, frustration. My predecessors have all diligently tackled the challenge before us with the courage and the finesse that it requires. Each and every one of them has covered some ground, explored some territory and in this way moved our Conference a little closer to consensus.

I will strive towards that same goal, building on what has been achieved so far. Ambassador Amorim jokes that he has never received so many congratulations for having failed. Indeed, in February 1993, when he previously presided over the Conference, it was able to agree on the organizational arrangements which permitted it to get down to work expeditiously on substantive issues. Four ad hoc committees were established as subsidiary bodies at the time. Today we must realize that the political and strategic environment in which the Conference on Disarmament is functioning has changed. The last two years have shown that now we need an even more determined and all-inclusive political and diplomatic effort to agree on advancing the Conference's work in the field of multilateral disarmament and arms control. Our common objective is not out of reach, but it will require still more patience and persistence.

I would not subscribe to the opinions of those who consider that the Conference on Disarmament is in a crisis or even dying. I would rather tend to think that when there is a problem in international relations and global security, then surely there is a job for diplomats, and especially for this Conference. In my view, we are not just mere representatives of our respective Governments here, we are also participants in the formulation of our Governments' policies.

Accordingly, I will continue trying to harmonize our efforts to the best of my abilities, while at the same time representing the collective will of this Conference. The last President of the year's session has a special responsibility to continue consulting, if need be, after the closure of the session and, come that time, I intend to use this prerogative to the fullest. I am counting on all the delegations' usual cooperation.

My other duty as the presiding officer will be to facilitate the preparation of the Conference's annual report. In so doing I shall once again rely on the wisdom and the support of

(The President)

all of my colleagues in this hall, as well as on the proven efficiency of our secretariat, led by Secretary-General Vladimir Petrovsky and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail. With everyone's assistance I shall endeavour to follow the rules of procedure, which bind us to be accurate and factual in our account of the year's activities of the Conference on Disarmament.

This concludes my opening remarks. I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Israel, the United States of America and Romania. I give the floor to the representative of Israel, Ambassador David Peleg.

Mr. PELEG (Israel): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to wish you success and to assure you of our support. At the same time, I would like to thank your predecessors, Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium and Ambassador Celso Amorim of Brazil, for the work they have done. I also take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and to his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for their efforts and devotion.

As I will soon be leaving Geneva after two years as the Permanent Representative of Israel, I would like to express my gratitude for the cooperation and goodwill I have enjoyed during this period. I believe that this will also be a good opportunity to share with you some of Israel's views with regard to security and arms control.

At the outset, let me state that, as a relatively new member of the Conference on Disarmament, Israel is proud to be part of it and shall continue to contribute to its work. Israel attaches great importance to the Conference and sees it as a unique forum for freely negotiating issues of arms control and disarmament on the basis of consensus. Moreover, we believe that, as a multilateral forum with a global approach, the Conference must avoid assuming the mandates of other forums, bilateral or regional.

Israel is actively involved in promoting peace with its neighbours. At present, Israel enjoys peaceful relations with Egypt and Jordan, is negotiating with the Palestinians on the issue of permanent status and hopes soon to resume peace negotiations with Syria and Lebanon.

In spite of continued efforts to extend the peace process towards the goal of a comprehensive peace, there are still States in the Middle East which threaten Israel's security and continue to negate its very right to exist. One of these States, Iraq, devoted a major part of its vast income from oil to developing weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. It was engaged in a process of developing these weapons, notwithstanding its ratification of the NPT and the existence of safeguards. It developed chemical and biological weapons and used the poison gas which it had developed both against its own population and against Iran. During the Gulf war, its missiles were fired at Israeli cities and at cities in Saudi Arabia. These same missiles were capable of carrying non-conventional warheads. It should be noted that, besides Iraq, other States in our region have also developed chemical weapons and ballistic missiles armed with chemical warheads and still continue with these efforts.

(Mr. Peleg, Israel)

It is against this background and these threats that we, in Israel, have attempted to fashion our arms control policy. Given the close relationship between peace and security, we believe that peace can be durable only if it provides security to both or all sides. Moreover, we envisage arms control as fundamentally a regional endeavour, incorporating, where feasible, the obligations of international instruments. Universal international instruments certainly have a role to play but we see regionally negotiated arrangements, reinforced through mutual verification by the States in the region, as the key to their successful application. Confidence-building measures have a role to play as a means of building trust, and the arms control and regional security (ACRS) talks were a step in this direction.

Nevertheless, there are some issues that can be effectively covered by international conventions and, in those cases, Israel could accept their application without waiting for circumstances that would allow reciprocity and mutual verification.

In recent years Israel, in its commitment to non-proliferation, has taken several steps, which I shall describe.

Israel has signed the Chemical Weapons Convention but has not yet ratified it. One of the factors which Israel will have to take into account when making a decision as to ratification is that none of the Arab States with chemical weapons capability or suspected of holding chemical weapons have signed, let alone ratified, the Convention. Some have openly declared that they have no intention of so doing. It is a sobering thought for us that some of our neighbours contemplate the use of poison gas against us.

On the issue of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Israel fully supports the nuclear test ban, we have ratified the Partial Test-Ban Treaty, signed the CTBT and have not made our signature conditional on regional developments. An Israeli delegation was active in the drafting of the Treaty, and we remain constructively involved in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization. Here our endeavours are aimed at the expeditious development of all the necessary concepts, manuals, procedures and systems needed for a viable and effective CTBT Organization, in accordance with the Treaty. Israel has begun preparations for involvement and integration into the proposed international monitoring system. Although Israel has not yet ratified the Treaty, it is aware of the international legal obligations that a State assumes upon signature of such a treaty, even prior to ratification, and Israel, needless to say, accepts the obligation involved.

Although technically Israel cannot join the Missile Technology Control Regime, it has undertaken to comply fully with its provisions. In another field of non-proliferation supply control, Israel has enacted stringent legislation on export control, thereby ensuring that it is not a source of proliferation.

Israel is a party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and I am pleased to inform the Conference that, on 24 August 2000, the Government of Israel decided to ratify the amended Protocol II concerning mines, and Protocol IV concerning laser weapons. Although Israel is not a party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel

(Mr. Peleg, Israel)

Landmines, it has ceased production of anti-personnel landmines and has declared a moratorium on their export and it will be ready to participate in the drafting of an international agreement project for mine-clearance and the rehabilitation of victims of mines.

With regard to the confidence-building measure of transparency in armaments (TIA), Israel supports the principle of the Register and makes an annual report. We do not believe it would be fruitful to widen the scope of the United Nations Register and we feel that efforts should be devoted rather to encouraging States to report to the existing Register. We find it strange to hear some of our neighbouring States call for a vast increase in the scope of the Register, when they fail to submit reports even under the present limited scope.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I would like to reiterate my wishes to the Conference. The challenges are huge, and the international community is still awaiting their accomplishment.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Israel for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. For my part and, I believe, on behalf of the Conference, I would like to express our gratitude for his cooperation during his tour of duty in Geneva and to wish him well in his future endeavours.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Robert T. Grey.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Mr. President, I congratulate you as you assume the presidency for the final month of our session this year. My delegation and I look forward to working with you as you guide us in the drafting of our Conference's annual report, and later on, as we begin our preparations for the 2001 session. You also have our sympathy in that the luck of the alphabet has placed you in the longest presidency of the year.

I would like to speak today on outer space, a topic of great interest to all members of this Conference.

The American space programme was born at the height of the cold war amid a looming rivalry for supremacy in missiles and space. But even then, much of our space effort was directed towards strictly scientific exploration and international cooperation. The plaque left behind by the crew of the Apollo 11 - the first men on the Moon - says "We came in peace for all mankind". Now more than ever, with the cold war a part of history, we still view our space activities primarily as an instrument of human advancement and international cooperation.

Having sent astronauts to the Moon, robots to Mars and spacecraft to the farthest reaches of our solar system, we are today engaged in a partnership of 16 nations to build an international space station. Permanent space station crews will perform long-term research in a range of scientific disciplines, seeking to advance our understanding of life sciences, earth sciences, and materials processing. The international space station will provide a focal point for space operations among the partner nations well into the new century, while serving as a stepping stone for potential exploration of the solar system.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

Current uses of outer space involve an unprecedented degree of cooperation. There is a growing market place in space for commercial services, including telecommunications, weather forecasting and global imaging of the earth's surface. The United States is pleased to have contributed substantially to these efforts, and we will continue to pursue greater levels of partnership and cooperation in this area.

Free access to and use of space for all are central to the preservation of peace and the protection of every nation's security, civil and commercial interests. The United States strongly endorses articles I and II of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, which expressly allow for the free exploration and use of outer space and celestial bodies by all nations. The United States sees no justification for limitations on the right of sovereign States to acquire data from space, and we consider purposeful interference with space systems an infringement on sovereign rights.

The United States is committed, through its national space policy, to the exploration and use of outer space by nations for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all humanity. For us, as for others, the notion "peaceful purposes" does of course allow for activities that support defensive purposes and serve national security goals. Improving our ability to support military operations worldwide, monitor and respond to military threats, and monitor arms control and non-proliferation agreements and activities are key priorities for our national security space activities. These activities, moreover, strengthen international stability and security.

Like others, we rely heavily on satellites to provide early warning against missile attack. Satellites are also indispensable in monitoring arms control agreements. Verification of compliance with the 1963 Limited Test-Ban Treaty, the 1972 SALT I agreements - including the ABM Treaty - and the START I and START II treaties is highly dependent on the use of remote sensing satellites to monitor activity. In the future, verification of CTBT compliance will depend in significant respects on our satellite-based national technical means of verification. These treaties acknowledge the legitimacy of this use of space as "national technical means of verification".

Lawful military uses of space can enhance international peace and security in significant ways and provide broad benefits to the international community. Examples include communications, global positioning, navigation, environmental monitoring and the ability to track movements of large groups of refugees and displaced persons. Other examples include helping States to monitor treaty compliance, combat terrorism and cooperate in enforcing United Nations Security Council sanctions.

A number of standing agreements regulate military activities in outer space. The Limited Test-Ban Treaty of 1963 requires parties not to conduct nuclear weapon tests or other nuclear explosions in outer space. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 puts celestial bodies off-limits to all nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction and prohibits placing in orbit or stationing such weapons in outer space - a far-reaching non-proliferation measure in itself. It also limits the use of celestial bodies exclusively for peaceful purposes and prohibits their use for military establishments or manoeuvres, or for testing any type of weapons. This regime provides the basis for keeping outer space free from the most threatening weapons. The ABM Treaty

(Mr. Grey, United States)

of 1972 prohibits space-based anti-ballistic missile systems or components. In addition, in the 1997 demarcation agreements - which have yet to enter into force - the United States, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine agreed that, to preclude ambiguous situations or misunderstandings related to compliance with that ABM Treaty provision, they would not develop, test, or deploy space-based components based on other physical principles that are capable of substituting for such interceptor missiles.

The activities of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, a standing body of the United Nations General Assembly, are also germane to our consideration of outer space in this body. While it does not deal with disarmament and arms control aspects of outer space, the Committee is concerned with promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of space.

In sum, we can conclude that there already exists an extensive and comprehensive system for limiting the uses of outer space to those that are peaceful and for providing a framework for the legitimate military uses of outer space. We are therefore not persuaded that the multilateral arms control regime, as it impacts on outer space, requires augmentation.

Why, then, do we hear calls for the immediate negotiation of a new outer space treaty?

Certain member States have insisted that the Conference on Disarmament should not and cannot resume negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) unless it also conducts negotiations on outer space issues. This is inappropriate. Member States have agreed on terms of reference for FMCT negotiations, and they have committed themselves in this Conference and in other forums to the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations. By contrast, they are far from agreement on terms of reference for any possible negotiations on outer space. In fact, even among those who favour negotiations on outer space, there is substantial disagreement on what should be covered.

Those who call for outer space negotiations are putting the cart before the horse. The next logical step would be for member States to conduct a thorough discussion of possible measures related to outer space, to identify proposals for further protections - if there are any - that may be desirable and feasible. Such discussion would have to take into account the need to enhance international peace and security while simultaneously protecting the security interests of States that have substantial assets in outer space and that carry out important activities there. Unless and until there is a convergence of interests and views on this issue, it is impractical to insist that the Conference must negotiate a treaty.

Thus, we do not understand how the objective of such calls can be to bring about negotiations on a topic that is far from ripe and that has not benefited from thorough discussion by this Conference. We are, rather, of the view that holding FMCT hostage to negotiations on outer space is, simply put, a poorly disguised effort to block FMCT negotiations altogether.

On two previous occasions, the Conference, acting by consensus, established an ad hoc committee mandated to conduct negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. In 1998, the United Nations General Assembly, also acting by consensus, adopted a resolution that called on

(Mr. Grey, United States)

the Conference to re-establish its FMCT Ad Hoc Committee at the beginning of its next session. Furthermore, at the May 2000 NPT Review Conference, the 155 participating NPT parties urged this Conference to agree on a work programme that would include the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations "with a view to their conclusion within five years".

If we combine these commitments with the assurances of which we are all aware in our discussions, it is clear that all the Conference's member States have agreed to support FMCT negotiations. Many delegations, including my own, believe that the Conference needs to resume the negotiations independently, on their own merits. In other words, we believe the decision to negotiate a cut-off treaty should not be linked to anything else. The Conference has always followed a case-by-case approach when it really meant business, and we believe member States should return to that practice.

Others, however, have argued that the Conference must address three priority topics - FMCT, nuclear disarmament and outer space - and that the Conference's decision to resume FMCT negotiations should be accompanied by parallel decisions to establish subordinate bodies that will deal with nuclear disarmament and outer space.

Although the United States remains sceptical that Conference work on these subjects will prove productive, we have made a serious effort to find a middle ground in order to get FMCT negotiations started. With this goal in mind, we have stated that the United States could agree to the simultaneous establishment of subordinate bodies to discuss nuclear disarmament and outer space issues under appropriate mandates. We also agree that the Conference's work programme should include a range of other topics: negative security assurances, anti-personnel landmines, transparency in armaments and three procedural questions - agenda reform, membership expansion and "improved and effective functioning".

What more must member States do before the Conference on Disarmament can get down to work? It is no secret to any in this room that this Conference is facing a crisis of credibility. To us, the way ahead seems simple: get to work in areas where there is agreement to do so. Do not hold everything hostage to everything else.

Mr. President, many of your predecessors have wrestled with the challenge of developing appropriate mandates that would permit organized discussion of nuclear disarmament and outer space issues. In June 1999 we all benefited from perspicacious proposals by Ambassador Dembri of Algeria - influential ideas even though they remained entirely informal. In June 2000, Ambassador Lint of Belgium proposed wording refinements that drew on Ambassador Dembri's efforts and adopted the same fundamental formula: FMCT negotiations plus discussions on nuclear disarmament and outer space. It is significant that Ambassadors Dembri and Lint both reached the same conclusion: FMCT is ripe for negotiations in the Conference, while nuclear disarmament and outer space are not. Your immediate predecessor, Ambassador Celso Amorim of Brazil, also reached an identical conclusion after yet further work.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

With regard to a mandate for discussions on nuclear disarmament, I believe member States have come very close to agreement. A few words remain to be worked out, but I am confident that if the terms of reference for consideration of nuclear disarmament were the only outstanding issue, member States could resolve it expeditiously.

Unfortunately, however, the principle of outer space discussions has not been accepted. To the contrary, we continue to hear calls for immediate negotiations. These are urgently required, we hear, to prevent several grave consequences that might result from United States plans for a national missile defence system: the possibility that national missile defence would upset strategic stability, leading to a new arms race here on Earth; the risk of an arms race in outer space; and the potential for disruption of the arms control process. It is important that we be perfectly clear about what the United States is proposing and why these concerns are groundless.

The United States national missile defence system under consideration is not designed against Russia or China but to defend against a limited ballistic missile attack from certain countries of concern. A system capable of defending against a large-scale attack with sophisticated weapons would be both qualitatively and quantitatively different from that which the United States is considering. Moreover, we believe that confidence-building and transparency measures will provide added assurance that the United States is not contemplating a rapid breakout to attempt to build a complete defence.

Regarding the risk of an arms race in outer space, as I mentioned earlier, the Outer Space Treaty and the ABM Treaty already prohibit key activities associated with many concerns about putting weapons in outer space. The United States fully respects those treaties' constraints. The weapons of the ballistic national missile defence systems that the United States is considering are terrestrial, not space-based. The proposed United States national missile defence system would use land-based interceptors, launchers and radars. It would use satellites only to provide early warning and data on threat missiles. This is a far cry from the weaponization of outer space. Satellites belonging to a number of countries here, including those strongly supporting outer space negotiations, already orbit the earth by the dozens, providing various types of data for military purposes to ships, aircraft and ground forces worldwide. Should we prohibit these, too?

The United States remains committed to the arms control and disarmament process and sees no contradiction between that process and the pursuit of a limited national missile defence system. The ABM Treaty is an integral part of our mutual efforts with the Russian Federation to reduce offensive nuclear arms. Twenty-eight years after entry into force of the Treaty, the United States and Russia are convinced that the ABM Treaty remains an important element in our plans for further reductions. Representatives of our two countries have been discussing how to preserve and strengthen the Treaty in ways that will maintain its fundamental effectiveness under strategic and political circumstances that have changed dramatically in the last three decades. During these discussions, the United States has proposed modifications to the Treaty that would permit the deployment of the initial national missile defence system. The United States remains firmly committed to these bilateral discussions.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

As I mentioned earlier, the objectives of the ABM Treaty are to ensure that each party's strategic nuclear deterrent is not threatened by the missile defences of the other party and to promote the reduction of offensive nuclear arms. The limited national missile defence system that we are developing would not threaten Russia's strategic deterrent and will promote further nuclear arms reductions. The arms control process would not be undermined.

The United States is convinced that the existing treaty regime for outer space has served the international community well. There is no arms race in outer space - rather, there is unprecedented cooperation. Nonetheless, we are aware of the concerns expressed and we are prepared to exchange views on this issue. We are not opposed to the establishment of an appropriate subordinate body for such discussions, in the context of active negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The United States is also convinced that an agreed work programme along the lines proposed by Ambassador Dembri, Ambassador Lint and Ambassador Amorim is supported by the vast majority of the Conference membership and provides the best way - and perhaps the only way - to get this Conference back to work. Those who are not prepared to accept reasonable compromises will bear a heavy responsibility if this Conference continues to be prevented from negotiating multilateral arms control agreements.

Mr. President, I am confident that in your efforts to lay the groundwork for an overall agreement on a work programme at the beginning of the 2001 session, you will continue to promote the same fundamental approach as your distinguished predecessors. In expressing great hope for the success of your efforts, I pledge the active cooperation of my delegation.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, Ambassador Anda-Cristina Filip.

Ms. FILIP (Romania): Mr. President, First of all let me congratulate you, a distinguished representative of a nation with which Romania enjoys a long tradition of friendship and good neighbourly relations, on your assumption for the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that your diplomatic skills and experience will be of the greatest help in discharging the special responsibility of the President at the conclusion of a Conference session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessors on their intensive and constructive efforts aimed at moving the work of the Conference forward, as well as to thank Ambassador Amorim of Brazil for the kind words of welcome he addressed to me last week, on taking up my post as head of the delegation of Romania to the Conference on Disarmament.

I have asked for the floor a week after the Conference on Disarmament once again came close to a major breakthrough in the stalemate which has persisted in this hall for the past two years. Another lost chance, some will say, but the broad cross-regional appreciation expressed

(Ms. Filip, Romania)

for the efforts aimed at seeking and building consensus for the adoption of our programme of work, as well as the readiness of some delegations to support the proposed language, is a clear indication that the willingness to ensure that the Conference lives up to its responsibilities as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and non-proliferation has not diminished. And I believe we should see this as a positive outcome, intended to exert a beneficial influence in the near future and for the next session of the Conference on Disarmament. Once again dialogue has proved to be an important tool for approaching the sensitive issues of today's international security environment, while allowing each and every country to express specific national security concerns and preoccupations.

The authorities of my country attach particular importance to the international agreements in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation of weapons and arms control, as these are part of our national security approach. Halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional armaments has for a long time been a priority for Romania. Moreover, we attach great importance to the role of the Conference on Disarmament in fulfilling this priority, as this forum is the cradle of many international multilateral agreements which have helped to secure stability, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, thus strengthening international peace.

The conclusion of the CTBT in 1996 is standing proof that the Conference on Disarmament can continue to make a contribution to international security and peace. In October 1999, the Romanian Parliament ratified the CTBT, representing an important contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament, to which my delegation is genuinely committed.

In the view of my authorities, starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty is a logical step forward to consolidating the process of nuclear disarmament. The re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on FMCT is a top priority for my delegation, which stands ready to participate in the negotiations.

We consider that the provisions and language contained in the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference in 2000 gave clear guidance on the future of nuclear disarmament and its successful conclusion. We also attach considerable importance to the contribution made to this process by the reductions of nuclear weapons and the strategic talks at the bilateral level between the United States and the Russian Federation.

My delegation also stands ready to participate in a debate on the issue of transparency in armaments, one of the non-controversial items of the programme of work. We are witnessing a time when the proliferation of internal conflicts and crises is providing fertile ground for the emergence and consolidation of non-traditional threats, which tend to take shape as a complex combination of terrorism, ethnic cleansing, organized crime and arms trafficking. Past and recent experience shows that the worst affected categories are the civilian population and international personnel engaged in humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations.

(Ms. Filip, Romania)

In the current situation, there is an urgent need to resume the debate in our Conference on the aforementioned issue, in order to prepare the ground for future international instruments intended to promote restraint by both producers and end-users and to strengthen their sense of responsibility, while providing for equal and undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments.

Geneva will soon host the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This Conference will address a plague affecting, without discrimination, the lives of a wide number of peoples and hampering their social and economical development. Romania is a signatory to the Convention and shares the view that the Conference on Disarmament can make an important contribution to limiting the spread of anti-personnel mines by resuming its efforts to reach a world-wide ban on exports of such mines, a goal which is both feasible and complementary to the objective of the total elimination of this category of weapons.

The issues mentioned before, along with procedural issues, such as the agenda, improved and effective functioning and membership, constitute the priorities of my delegation for the Conference on Disarmament. We stand ready to participate in the debate on other topics of interest to the delegations around this table.

To this end, the Conference must move out of its present situation and start working on the substance of the issues, at least on the non-controversial items of the agenda, in order to create better conditions for finding a mutual and generally acceptable agreement on the remaining issues.

In my national capacity and as coordinator of the Eastern European group, I would like to assure you, Mr. President, of the full cooperation and support of my delegation in your efforts in discharging the important tasks before you, with a view to setting in place the most favourable conditions for a rapid resumption of the Conference's work at the beginning of the 2001 session.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Romania for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Iraq.

Mr. AL-DOURI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you every success in the discharge of your delicate and difficult task of achieving the results we all hope for.

Mr. President, it was not my intention to make a statement today, but I find myself forced to do so in view of the attack to which my country has been subjected by the representative of a certain State, the basic objective of which is to try to find justifications, to which I will be referring, for besmirching the reputation of my country.

Mr. President, we all know that this international Conference is the sole negotiating forum for disarmament, to which the international community attaches great importance,

(Mr. Al-Douri, Iraq)

ardently hoping that the Conference on Disarmament will succeed in fully discharging its lofty mission by taking the steps expected of it in the field of disarmament, particularly in regard to weapons of mass destruction and the nuclear weapons held by the State whose representative referred to my country a short while ago. These weapons constitute one of the main sources of the fear and terror that are threatening the future of our contemporary world. For that reason, any agreement in the field of disarmament which the Conference might achieve would allay such fears and give rise to new hopes for the strengthening of international peace and security to which that speaker's State currently poses one of the greatest threats. In the light of this pertinent fact, Mr. President, that speaker's comments fell totally outside the scope of the fundamental objectives of this Conference. Unfortunately, he attempted to exploit this negotiating forum for political purposes and well-known reasons with a view to harming the reputation of my country, one of its member States which, as everyone knows, has been subjected, for almost 10 years, to the most loathsome disarmament operation imposed on any State in modern history, in addition to what my country is suffering in terms of the damage and harm inflicted on its people in all aspects of their lives as a result of the notoriously selective policies pursued by certain permanent members of the Security Council which, under pressure from the State to which that speaker belongs, have not hesitated to adopt double or multiple standards and to blatantly interfere in the affairs of States, including my country, Iraq, under various pretexts by which no one is deceived.

In light of what I have just said, I hope that the work of the Conference on Disarmament will remain far removed from the politicization to which the work of other United Nations organizations, conferences and activities is subjected under pressure from certain major Powers, which are seeking to propagate allegations such as those made by that speaker.

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to make it clear that the reason which induced that speaker to refer to my country with such virulence was to find an excuse or a pretext to justify the non-accession of his country to nuclear-weapon conventions as everyone knows that his State possesses hundreds of nuclear bombs which are threatening not only the Middle East but the entire world. From this rostrum, I defy that State to accept any form of control or inspection by the international organizations competent to verify the existence, or non-existence, of those lethal weapons in his country. With the support of other States, that country is also persistently and obstinately refusing to implement United Nations Security Council resolutions concerning the question of Palestine and its ongoing occupation of the Syrian Golan in an attempt to justify its colonial presence in the region, backed by all its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction which pose a threat to all States of the region, including my country Iraq. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Myanmar.

Mr. MYA THAN (Myanmar): Mr. President, may I begin by extending the warmest congratulations of my delegation to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in this crucial final phase of its 2000 session. I pledge the fullest cooperation of my delegation.

I should also like to express our deep appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Amorim, for the invaluable contribution he has made as President of the Conference for the period of July and August and for the important proposal he has put forward on a possible programme of work for the Conference.

I shall not be making a policy statement today. I reserve such a policy statement for a more opportune date at a later stage. I have requested the floor merely to express a few thoughts of mine on the ongoing consultations on the draft programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament.

In a lighter vein, I recall that at the last plenary, our then President Ambassador Amorim, told us an interesting story about the blue rose and the white rose. We appreciate Ambassador Amorim's story very much. There is a saying that imitation is the highest form of appreciation. Allow me, therefore, to follow Ambassador Amorim's example and tell you a story from the folklore of Asia.

At the very outset, I wish to clarify that this story does not originate in Myanmar but in one of Myanmar's neighbouring countries. I shall not however name that country.

The story is about the fertility cult that was in vogue in Asia in those ancient times. Once upon a time, there was a king. The king had many queens, but did not have any children. There was no heir to the throne. It was the ardent desire of both the king and the chief queen that they should have a son who would be the heir to the throne. The ministers and astrologers advised the king to try the idea of opening a "Fertility House". The idea was that the king would appoint a panel of judges to select the best specimen of manhood from among the nation's menfolk, who would offer their services to help their king and queen in this respect. The selected supermen would each then be allowed to spend a few days with the chief queen in the "Fertility House", until she was impregnated by one of them. So it was that, one after another, the selected supermen from the capital spent a few days each with the chief queen in the "Fertility House". No one was successful. At long last, an unknown old man from one of the remotest places in the country came along and said he could help out the king and chief queen.

The old man spent just one night with the chief queen, she fell pregnant. They all lived happily ever after.

Mr. President, the analogy is apt. Just as, in the story, one superman after another spent a few days each with the chief queen in the "Fertility House" so does each president spend a little over one month with the Conference on Disarmament with a view to producing a draft programme of work. Thus far without success. Now it is your turn. Your turn, Mr. President, will be the longest one, covering the intersessional period up to January 2001.

(Mr. Mya Than, Myanmar)

I hope, Mr. President, that you will be able to inpregnate the Conference on Disarmament with new ideas that will help in reaching consensus on the draft programme of work. I wish you the best of luck.

Let me now express a few thoughts, in all seriousness, on the draft programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. My first point is related to the question of preparing the ground for the draft programme of work for 2001, in the event that we cannot agree on it for 2000.

If in the remaining few weeks we can reach consensus on the draft programme of work for 2000 it will be well and good. But I shall not underestimate the difficulties that face us in that task. It is likely that we shall not have a programme of work for 2000. In such an event, we should aim to do the groundwork for reaching consensus on the draft programme of work at the very beginning of the 2001 session.

My second point relates to preservation of the useful groundwork done by successive presidents. We welcome and encourage you, Mr. President, to continue your intensive consultations to build on Ambassador Armorim's proposal on the draft programme of work. In our view, Ambassador Amorim's proposal, in particular, constitutes an important step and can provide a good basis for further intensive consultations. Delegations, including my own, may have preferred positions. But his proposal reflects the gradual convergence of various positions. We feel that these significant efforts should not be lost. It is, therefore, essential that the efforts of successive presidents, including Ambassador Amorim and your good self, Mr. President, should be preserved and reflected in some way in the Conference's annual report.

My third point relates to the drafting of the report. We believe that the report of the Conference on Disarmament should be simple, straightforward and factual.

My fourth point relates to the draft resolution on the work of the Conference to be considered by the First Committee at the forthcoming Millennium Assembly. As usual, you, Mr. President, will be submitting this draft resolution to the First Committee on behalf of the Conference. We believe that this draft resolution should send a clear political signal: it should reflect the status of consultations at the Conference's 2000 session. It should also reflect the strong determination or commitment of the member States of the Conference on Disarmament to reach consensus on the draft programme of work and to start substantive work at the very beginning of the 2001 session.

I offer these comments in the hope that they will be useful inputs to the ongoing consultations. I believe that the steps outlined above will facilitate our efforts to reach consensus on the draft programme of work for the 2001 session of the Conference on Disarmament, if not for the remaining period of 2000. This will, I hope, enable the Conference to start substantive work immediately and smoothly at the beginning of the 2001 session.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Myanmar for his wise and perceptive statement and for the confidence that he has placed in me. May I take this opportunity to announce that I have been assured by my authorities that they are able to supply this Conference with any amount of blue roses that we wish.

This concludes the list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this point? That does not seem to be the case.

Before we conclude, let me make an announcement. As Thursday, 7 September 2000, is an official holiday and the Palais des Nations will be closed, I suggest that the next plenary meeting of the Conference be held on Tuesday, 5 September, at 10 a.m. I trust that this suggestion is acceptable.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.859
5 September 2000

Original: ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 5 September 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Petko Draganov (Bulgaria)

GE.00-63323 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 859th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me at the outset, on behalf of the Conference, extend a warm welcome to the participants in the 2000 United Nations Disarmament Fellowship and Training Programme who are observing the proceedings of this plenary. I am sure they will benefit from exposure to our forum, and especially from the presentations that will be made to them on various aspects of our work. I wish them a fruitful and useful stay in Geneva.

I have no speaker inscribed on my list for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? I see the United States of America. Ambassador Grey, you have the floor.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Mr. President, I spoke at our last plenary meeting on the subject of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and its relationship, or should I say, the lack thereof, to the United States national missile defence policy. This was made clear - very clear - by President Clinton's speech at Georgetown University last Friday, 1 September 2000. It is my intention to ask that these remarks be circulated as a document of the Conference.

With President Clinton's speech, there are no more excuses for not getting down to work in the Conference on Disarmament and fulfilling the task we have already agreed to do, namely the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations. At the same time, the Conference can initiate consideration of issues related to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space in appropriate subsidiary bodies. If the Conference cannot begin this work now, at this late point in our session, it should at least make a solid recommendation in its annual report that it start work next year. There is simply no longer any excuse for this Conference not to get to work.

The PRESIDENT: Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this point? That does not seem to be the case.

Before I adjourn this meeting, I should also like to inform you that the draft annual report of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly, as contained in document CD/WP.511, will be available in all official languages in delegations' boxes on Friday, 8 September 2000. It is my intention to conduct the first reading of the draft annual report at an informal plenary meeting following the plenary meeting on Thursday, 14 September 2000.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 14 September 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.860
14 September 2000

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 14 September 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Petko Draganov (Bulgaria)

GE.00-63413 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 860th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First, let me welcome the new representative of Israel, Ambassador Yaakov Levy, and, on behalf of all delegations present here, assure him of our cooperation.

I would like to remind you that immediately following this plenary meeting we shall hold an informal plenary to start consideration of our draft annual report, as contained in document CD/WP.511.

As you are all aware, our esteemed colleague, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua of Italy, will soon be leaving Geneva to assume other important duties. He has been appointed by his Government to the high post of Head of Protocol of the Italian Republic. Ambassador Balboni Acqua joined us on 30 April 1997 and those of you who were here then may recall that it was also a difficult time when the Conference was grappling with its programme of work. He has brought to our proceedings a wide measure of professionalism and moderation, a recognized capacity to take into account the concerns of all delegations, and a willingness to strive for compromise. I am sure that you will all join me in extending to him and his family our best wishes in their future endeavours.

I have today on my list of speakers the representatives of Italy and China. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua.

Mr. BALBONI ACQUA (Italy) (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. President. This is the first time that I have taken the floor during the proceedings of the third part of the 2000 session of the Conference, under your guidance. Allow me first of all to congratulate you, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, on your accession to the presidency. I am very happy to see you guide this assembly as the representative of a country with which Italy maintains very close ties of friendship. The prestige and the international role of your country, as well as your personal skills, will be of great use in successfully guiding the drafting of the Conference's final report to the General Assembly, which has always been a very difficult task. I would like to express to you my best wishes and my congratulations on the way in which you have presided over these discussions thus far.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome those colleagues who have recently joined us, namely, the ambassadors of Hungary, Chile, Ecuador, Romania and Israel, and to extend to them my best wishes for their mission in Geneva.

My purpose today is no longer to contribute to the efforts which you have been making as President, but rather to take my leave, because tomorrow I will leave for my country, having been called to other duties. I would not have imagined, three and a half years ago, that I might ever miss the Palais des Nations frescoes José Maria Sert or this Council Chamber of the League of Nations. They fill us with a sense of history and an awareness of the tribulations of the last

(Mr. Balboni Acqua, Italy)

century. I will miss the atmosphere of this "exclusive club", as our Conference is sometimes considered, a genuine school of diplomacy where no one feels that he has surrendered his national position for the benefit of objectives dictated by others.

When I came to Geneva in April 1997, my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lamberto Dini, had delivered his statement to the Conference, stressing the issues which are priorities for our Government and defending in particular the role of the Conference and the specific nature of this unique multilateral forum for negotiations on disarmament. Two years later, the Italian Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Patrizia Toia, addressed the Conference and reaffirmed Italy's long-standing aim of intensifying and rendering irreversible the process of nuclear disarmament in pursuit of the ultimate goal of eliminating these weapons. She also expressed the determination of our Government to support any specific and realistic initiatives to accelerate implementation of the plan of action for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation contained in the document "Principles and Objectives" adopted by consensus at the NPT Conference in 1995.

In my view, Italy's positions, which have been clearly and consistently set forth in the last few years by senior representatives of my Government and several times by myself, are sufficiently precise, understandable and well-known, that they do not require further analysis.

In short, FMCT is our priority. Its negotiating mandate is clear. Italy does not set preconditions for the launching of these negotiations and does not expect such conditions to be set by other delegations. Italy is also prepared to deal with other issues and to begin negotiations on them as soon as consensus and a negotiating mandate have been reached.

Italy is one of the founding countries of the Conference on Disarmament. For that reason, we attach great importance to the development of its activities, which we consider essential for the safeguarding of international peace and security. It is also for that reason that, a few days after my departure, my successor will arrive in Geneva and I am certain that he will also show great commitment to the cause of disarmament and the issues dealt with by this Conference. I hope that substantive issues and realism will finally prevail, as is always the case when there is firm political will to find a solution to problems.

In taking my leave, I would like once again to turn to my colleagues, from the longest serving to those most recently arrived, and to thank them for their approachability and, in many cases, their friendship towards my country, my delegation and me personally. I know that some of them hold important posts in their Governments, and others will do so in the near future. I would like to express my thanks to all of you and hope some day to welcome you to my own country.

I would like to thank our Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, whose courtesy and receptiveness I have deeply appreciated, as well as his discretion and great wisdom. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, who over the last few years has shown such great patience, a true virtue, and has taught us the art of hoping. I would also like to thank the hard-working and energetic staff of the secretariat, our interpreters

(Mr. Balboni Acqua, Italy)

for their dedication and all those who contribute discreetly and efficiently to the smooth course of our work. My gratitude also goes to UNIDIR, this small but important international institution, whose dynamism I have come to value so highly under the guidance of its two exceptional directors, Ms. Patricia Lewis and Mr. Christopher Carle.

The ancient Romans said that all roads lead to Rome, headquarters of world Catholicism and centre of a civilization which has influenced the whole world. For those who desire to go there, they should know that as of today, in Rome, they will have one more friend.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi.

Mr. HU XIAODI (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, at the outset, let me congratulate you on your assumption of your post as the last President of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament and, inter alia, on guiding the preparation of the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament and the draft resolution to be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly. Your predecessor, Ambassador Armorim, has made valuable efforts towards bridging the differences between the parties and breaking the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, and these merit our high appreciation. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail.

I would like to speak today on the negative impacts of the national anti-missile defence system (NMD) and the relationship between NMD and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

My first point relates to the dire consequences of NMD. Recent years have seen concerted efforts to develop and deploy NMD, with a view to seeking unilateral military and strategic superiority. This negative development has placed the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) in danger of collapse. This in turn could lead to serious consequences and the matter is already being regarded with great concern by the international community.

On 18 July 2000, the Presidents of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation issued a joint statement on missile defence. The Russian and Chinese delegations jointly requested the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament to distribute the statement as an official document, of the Conference on Disarmament, and it was issued under the symbol CD/1622.

The two leaders noted in their statement that the ABM Treaty remains the cornerstone of global strategic stability and international security and forms the basis for a framework of key international agreements designed to reduce and limit strategic offensive weapons and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The collapse of the ABM Treaty would trigger a new round of the arms race and reverse the positive trends that have emerged in international

(Mr. Hu Xiaodi, China)

politics following the end of the cold war. Any country pressing for an amendment of this fundamental treaty in the realm of arms control and disarmament will have to bear full responsibility for undermining international stability and security and for all the consequences resulting therefrom.

The two leaders also stressed in their statement that the plan to establish NMD, a system prohibited under the ABM Treaty, is a cause of profound concern. It is aimed in essence as seeking unilateral superiority in the military and security arena. Implementation of the plan would have the gravest adverse consequences not only for the security of China, Russia and other States, but also for that of the United States itself and for global strategic stability. The international community should therefore continue to give serious attention to this perilous development and take the necessary measures to halt it.

What, we might ask, will be the grave consequences of the development and deployment of NMD?

First, it will undermine global strategic balance and stability and threaten international peace and security. The ABM Treaty is the cornerstone of global strategic balance and stability. It clearly limits the deployment by its State parties of anti-missile defence systems aimed at protecting their whole territories. NMD, however, is precisely such an anti-missile defence system aimed at protecting the whole territory of a State and, as such, violates the AMB Treaty. Once NMD is deployed, the ABM Treaty will be effectively dead. For a State to seek anti-missile defence capabilities protecting its whole territory is tantamount to seeking unilateral absolute security so as to gain absolute freedom to use or threaten to use force in international relations. As a result, the world may face once again the blackmail of nuclear war and the international situation may become turbulent and unstable.

Second, NMD will seriously obstruct arms control and the disarmament process and pose the danger of triggering a new arms race. The NMD plan is in fact a unilateral nuclear force expansion programme. The Russian Federation has stated in explicit terms that if the United States violates or pulls out of the ABMT Treaty, it will be forced to withdraw from a series of agreements and treaties in the field of arms control and disarmament. Therefore, if NMD is deployed, the results achieved by the United States and Russia over a number of years in bilateral nuclear disarmament will at once be set at naught. NMD will also be detrimental to multilateral arms control and the disarmament process. Other countries will not sit idly by and allow their security to be jeopardized. This may lead to various offensive and defensive measures and countermeasures, ground-based and space-based, which will likely result in an arms race.

Third, NMD will wreck international non-proliferation efforts. Non-nuclear-weapon States regard nuclear disarmament by nuclear-weapon States as the main prerequisite for them to honour their own commitment to remain non-nuclear. As NMD will reverse the process of nuclear disarmament, it is bound to shake the very foundations of non-proliferation. NMD will

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also sow distrust and discord among many countries and this in turn will adversely affect their cooperation in the cause of proliferation. Furthermore, as the anti-missile defence programme proceeds, there will be a proliferation of sophisticated anti-missile defence systems in other countries and regions. This will be tantamount to a proliferation of advanced missile technology, since the technologies for missiles and anti-missile defence are interrelated and mutually convertible.

It is therefore a matter of the utmost urgency that the international community take effective measures to halt this negative development. These are by no means groundless fears or alarmist talk, but a matter of very real concern.

It is true that international treaties have been concluded in the past on the prevention of the deployment of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. It is an incontestable fact, however, that existing international legal mechanisms only prohibit the deployment in outer space of such weapons, but are not concerned with preventing the deployment or use in outer space of new systems of weapons of mass destruction and their components, such as lasers, particle beams, X-rays and kinetic weapons. It so happens that these are also the very weapons envisaged for outer space by many programmes and projects, ranging from Star Wars to NMD. The existing international legal instruments must therefore be augmented and improved, not only to continue to ensure that weapons of mass destruction will never be introduced into outer space, but also - and more important and urgent - that they prevent the weaponization of outer space with the use of any other types of weapons. We are convinced that, like China, the majority of countries in the world want effective measures to be taken now to prevent the weaponization of outer space, rather than wait and in the future have to curb weapons in outer space, or even embark on another non-proliferation campaign, this time for space weapons.

We believe therefore that it is an absolute necessity for new international legal instruments to be negotiated now, to prevent the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space. This position has enjoyed extensive support from the international community, as demonstrated by the adoption, once again by an overwhelming majority, of the resolution on the prevention of the arms race in outer space by the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

My second point relates to the relationship between NMD and the arms race in outer space. It is claimed that NMD systems are not outer space weapons and will not lead to an arms race in outer space. It is further asserted that the time is not yet ripe for negotiations on outer space, and that to call now for such negotiations is to put the cart before the horse. What, we might then ask, is the true relationship between NMD and the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space?

Regardless whether they are the so-called "limited systems" or "more advanced systems", NMD systems undoubtedly include space weapon systems. Some of these sophisticated systems using weapons other than weapons of mass destruction will be space-based, providing target information and guidance for ground-based weapons systems,

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while others will be deployed in outer space or on the ground, intercepting and destroying targets in space or attacking from space targets within the atmosphere. Outer space will thus be turned into a battlefield.

It is obvious therefore that, once the ABM Treaty is discarded and the door opened for NMD, advanced weapons systems will be introduced into outer space, leading to its weaponization. Many documents, including important policy statements by political parties, point to such a prospect. Other countries are bound to make the necessary responses, as their essential security interests will be adversely affected. As a result, it is very likely that an arms race in outer space will follow.

It has been solemnly claimed that the only intention is to develop a limited NMD which has nothing to do with outer space. If that is so, why is there such opposition to negotiations on a treaty preventing an arms race in outer space?

My third point relates to the relationship between FMCT and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It has been alleged that negotiations on FMCT are deadlocked because they have been held hostage to negotiations on PAROS and that the linkage between FMCT and PAROS must therefore be removed.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that, as the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament ought to give priority to the current most urgent and important issue in the international arena. In the light of the above analysis we are fully convinced that prevention of the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space is precisely such an issue.

Given that position, we would never oppose negotiations on FMCT, which is a top priority for some other delegations. All that we are asking is that when we negotiate FMCT, we should also negotiate a treaty preventing the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space. This is fully in line with the spirit of relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. It is also the best way to break the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, by addressing the concerns of all sides in a comprehensive and balanced manner. This is far from holding FMCT hostage. On the contrary, however good it may sound, to argue in favour of the so-called "opposition to linkage" means in fact that a country will only contemplate the negotiation of its own priority items, at the expense of the primary concerns and the priority items of others. Is that fair and reasonable?

It must be pointed out that the Conference on Disarmament items are all closely connected with security and that the different aspects of security are inherently inseparable. Accordingly, these Conference on Disarmament items are also inescapably interconnected. As a result of a series of negative developments, including the setback of CTBT and in particular the NMD plan, serious doubt has been cast on the nature and purpose of FMCT negotiations. For that reason the issues of outer space and FMCT cannot but be closely linked.

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It will not help break the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament for countries to insist on negotiating their own priorities only and not to permit negotiations on the priority items of others We sincerely hope that all delegations will face up to reality, take due account of the concerns of others while attending to their own, and desist from continued efforts to block the PAROS negotiations.

Before I conclude, I would like to point out that the recent announcement by the United States President that the United States will not deploy NMD for the time being does not at all mean that the NMD plan has been abandoned. The decision to deploy NMD has merely been deferred while its technology is not yet ripe and there is still strong opposition from the international community. The United States President has ordered the continued development and testing of NMD. The international community should be quite clear on this point. It remains, therefore, an urgent task for the Conference on Disarmament and the international community in general to negotiate legal instruments preventing the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space and to safeguard the ABM Treaty from being scrapped or weakened. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to start the PAROS negotiations at the earliest possible time.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? The United States of America: Ambassador Grey, you have the floor.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Mr. President, I regret to be compelled to speak again at this stage of our deliberations, but the statement just made by the distinguished representative of China must be addressed promptly.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was concluded in 1972 by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It was negotiated and signed in a very different era, under political and military circumstances which are now a matter of history and which have little to do with the world today.

The Treaty has been amended before and can be amended again. The amendments that the United States is proposing will bring the Treaty up to date. They will also enable it to continue fulfilling its essential purpose: making sure that the strategic nuclear deterrent forces of the Untied States and of the Russian Federation are not threatened by missile defence capabilities of the other country. This basic understanding makes it possible for the Untied States and the Russian Federation to continue their mutual reductions in offensive nuclear arms, and to negotiate further agreements for that purpose.

As a political and diplomatic reality dating from 1972, the ABM Treaty regime did not contemplate the new threats that are emerging now and that affect the safety and well-being of

(Mr. Grey, United States of America)

the people of the United States. If the ABM Treaty regime were to fail, the responsibility for that - and for all the results that might ensue - would rest with those who were insisting that the regime had to remain static and could not be adapted to meet current realities.

In diplomacy, as in real life, factors that do not continue to evolve and grow are ultimately doomed to decline and die.

When I spoke on 31 August 2000, I emphasized that the limited system of national missile defence which the United States Government is considering would defend the people of the United States against a small-scale ballistic missile attack from certain countries of concern. I also stated quite explicitly that this limited system of national missile defence is not designed to provide defence against the ballistic missiles of Russia or China.

With these realities in mind, I am puzzled at the intensity of the concerns that have been expressed.

We reject allegations that actions or plans of the United States attest to a desire for hegemony, or any intent to carry out nuclear blackmail, or any supposed quest for absolute freedom to use force or threaten to use force in international relations.

These assertions have no basis in reality. A limited system of national missile defence does not give anyone hegemony. Indeed, in today's world, hegemony is in any case unattainable. The world is too diverse, too complex, too open to new ideas, for hegemony.

The era of empires is over, as is the era of one-party States. Information and ideas cannot be controlled by any Party or by any Government. People of all backgrounds have the opportunity, the capability, and the right to make up their own minds. Rote repetition of slogans and clichés that distort reality cannot change this essential fact.

In the end, the plans of the Untied States are exactly as I have described them. That is all they are, and there is nothing more to infer or imply.

In the agenda adopted on 18 January 2000 by the 66 member States of the Conference on Disarmament , the third item reads as follows: "Prevention of an arms race in outer space".

The United States agrees that it is appropriate for the Conference to keep this topic under review. On the other hand, we have repeatedly pointed out that there is no arms race in outer space - nor any prospect of an arms race in outer space, for as far down the road as anyone can see.

In the statement I gave on 31 August, I explained that the United States is committed to the exploration and use of outer space by all nations for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all humanity. This is specifically provided in our national space policy.

(Mr. Grey, United States of America)

It would serve no useful purpose to repeat all the remarks I made on 31 August, but I recommend that statement to any one who desires to review the facts. One salient point may bear repeating: plans of the United States for a possible system of national missile defence do not involve emplacing any weapon in outer space.

On the contrary, the missile defence system we are considering is essentially a terrestrial system that would use land-based interceptors, launchers, and radars.

Satellites of whatever description are not weapons. Any discussion of the overall purposes and functions of satellites could not be limited to a small number that might provide early warning information or data about threat missiles. As I pointed out on 31 August, many countries have satellites orbiting the earth that provide various types of data for military purposes to ships, aircraft and ground forces worldwide. This includes some members of the Conference who are strong advocates of active negotiations on a new outer space treaty.

Discussions in a subordinate body of the Conference would have to take this reality into account. In a broader sense, such discussions would have to grapple with the need to enhance international peace and security while simultaneously protecting the security interests of States that have substantial assets in outer space and that carryout important activities there.

These questions are not trivial. Nor are they easy to answer. Until the member States of the Conference have worked out answers that satisfy us all, it serves no constructive purpose to insist that the Conference must conduct negotiations on a new outer space treaty.

Much energy has been devoted to developing an overall menu of activities, so the Conference on Disarmament can finally get down to substantive work. Although I deeply regret that these efforts did not succeed in the year 2000, the proposals of two former Presidents of the Conference - Ambassador Lint of Belgium and Ambassador Amorim of Brazil - have given all of us substantial hope for early agreement in 2001.

The plain and simple fact is that all members of the Conference have committed themselves to supporting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. In addition, they have already agreed on terms of reference for such negotiations.

Many successive Presidents of the Conference have reached the conclusion that a fissile material cut-off treaty is ripe for negotiations in the Conference, whereas nuclear disarmament and outer space are not.

There has not yet been agreement on the wording of draft mandates for subordinate bodies that would deal with nuclear disarmament and outer space. On the other hand, member States appear to be very close to reaching agreement on terms of reference that would permit thorough and far-reaching discussions.

(Mr. Grey, United States of America)

If we are to speak of overall priorities, it is important to bear in mind that many members of the Conference attach very great importance to the establishment of a subordinate body on nuclear disarmament. The United States is not among that group of countries, but we share their commitment to the underlying long-term goal. In addition, we understand their desire that the Conference address the subject of nuclear disarmament in a structured and systematic way.

Over the past two years, the delegation of the United States has made substantial efforts to reach a compromise that would accommodate this desire of theirs. As I said on 31 August, I am confident that if the terms of reference for consideration of nuclear disarmament were the only outstanding issue, member States could resolve it expeditiously.

In practice, it is the unwise and unrealistic insistence on immediate negotiations on a new outer space treaty that keeps the Conference from establishing an appropriate subordinate body to discuss nuclear disarmament.

The longstanding deadlock likewise prevents negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, and I have repeatedly expressed intense concern about that.

As a final paradox, the unwise and unrealistic insistence on immediate negotiations on a new outer space treaty also prevents the Conference from conducting organized and sustained discussions on outer space issues. In other words, insistence on immediate negotiations on a new outer space treaty is actually blocking a necessary step that would have to occur before any such negotiations could conceivably begin.

This is counterproductive, at best. But even that amounts to a serious under-statement. After all, the word "counterproductive" implies that delegations who have taken a certain position really do wish to produce constructive results.

To us, at least, this seems to be an unwise and unwarranted assumption. Instead, we believe that the delegations employing these tactics may actually intend to produce utter paralysis, for the sake of blocking negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. And if, in practice, the tactics of these delegations likewise prevent the Conference from conducting organized deliberations on nuclear disarmament, they appear to be entirely willing to sacrifice that priority of a wide range of other member States.

Mr. President, I realize that this is a stark analysis - and a rather unpleasant one. But in all frankness I must submit to you, Sir, that the analysis I have given is neither more stark, nor more unpleasant, than the excruciating and extended paralysis that still afflicts the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this point? This does not seem to be the case.

That concludes our business for today. The next and, we hope, the last plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 21 September 2000, at 10 a.m.

As I mentioned to you earlier, we will convene in an informal plenary meeting - I suggest in 10 minutes' time - to start the consideration of the draft annual report.

The meeting was rose at 10.50 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.861
21 September 2000

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 21 September 2000, at 10.40 a.m.

President: Mr. Petko Draganov (Bulgaria)

GE.00-63465 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 861st plenary meeting of the Conference, the last for the 2000 session.

I should like at the outset to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of us all, to the three new colleagues who have recently joined us as representatives of their Governments to the Conference, Ambassador Roberto Betancourt Ruales of Ecuador, Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India and Ambassador Mario Maioloini of Italy, and assure them of our full cooperation and support in the discharge of their functions.

Allow me also to bid farewell to the representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Mykola Maimeskul, who, I understand, will soon be leaving his post to take up important responsibilities in his Government. Ambassador Maimeskul has represented his country in this Conference since August 1996 and we had the privilege to work under his presidency at a difficult time, when efforts were being made to widen the areas of agreement on the Conference's programme of work. He discharged his functions with dedication and diplomatic skill. It is an especially moving occasion for me, because he was presiding over this Conference when I first appeared in it and you will also recall that it was under his presidency and skilful leadership of this Conference that the Conference took a decision on the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on fissile material. I am sure that you will all join me in extending to him and his family our best wishes for the future.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Costa Rica, the Russian Federation and Algeria, who will be speaking on behalf of the Group of 21.

I give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica, Ambassador Nora Ruiz de Angulo.

Ms. RUIZ DE ANGULO (Costa Rica) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me to convey greetings to you, both on my own behalf and on that of the Government of Costa Rica, and to congratulate you on the way in which you have been presiding over this Conference. I also thank you for allowing me to speak before the plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, with a view to drawing the attention of distinguished representatives to Costa Rica's renewed desire to become a permanent member of this Conference.

We know of the difficult times through which the Conference is passing and of the various points of view on this subject and it is precisely for that reason that we wish to reiterate our aspiration and to commit ourselves to its attainment.

Throughout its history Costa Rica has been distinguished for its pacifist tradition and its rejection of the use of force as a means to resolve conflicts. Since its beginnings as a republic, it has endeavoured to maintain relations of peace and friendship with neighbouring countries and to date it continues to participate in many international activities and agreements aimed at reducing conventional armaments and weapons of mass destruction.

Its most relevant decision in this regard was the abolition of the army in 1949. It thereby reaffirmed its commitment to peace and entrusted its safety to international law, rejecting force

(Ms. Ruiz de Angulo, Costa Rica)

as a means of solving conflicts. From that time on, Costa Rica has entrusted its security to international rules and agreements and for that reason we wish to play an attentive and active role in addressing the international agenda on disarmament and international security.

In 1958 Costa Rica submitted the first specific proposal on the limitation of conventional weapons and the prohibition of nuclear weapons in the Organization of American States (OAS). Subsequently we ratified with great enthusiasm the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. Costa Rica firmly supports general and complete disarmament.

Ever since the San Francisco Conference, at which Costa Rica was a participant, we have continued to place our firm trust in the United Nations and we are strongly committed to its mandate to safeguard international peace and security. We shall therefore continue to support the work of the First Committee and the Commission on Disarmament by preparing, co-sponsoring and considering proposals conducive to international disarmament.

To this end we advocate the creation of nuclear-free zones, complete nuclear disarmament, the holding of the fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament and the expansion of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

We consider there should be a ban on the transfer of materiel and military personnel and the provision of financial or logistic support to States whose military or paramilitary units, or whose security forces are responsible for violations of human rights or contribute to such violations.

At the first preparatory meeting of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held on 3 March 2000, the Costa Rican Government officially presented a working document on an international code of conduct on arms transfers. The Preparatory Committee elected our country to the vice-chairmanship of the United Nations Conference, to be held in 2001.

During its participation on two occasions as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, most recently in 1998, Cost Rica focused its efforts on preventive diplomacy, the resolution of conflicts, humanitarian assistance and the protection of human rights in war zones, both during and after hostilities.

Within the framework of OAS Costa Rica has proposed a set of practical guidelines for the attainment of disarmament as a dividend for peace. These guidelines are designed to ensure a genuine reduction in conventional weapons, so that more resources can be devoted to development.

The agreements ratified by Costa Rica include the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Seabed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of

(Ms. Ruiz de Angulo, Costa Rica)

Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques; the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its three protocols; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction; and the Inter-American Convention against the Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

Costa Rica attaches great importance to multilateral forums and focuses its activities in the area of security on the strengthening of collective security agreements, of both regional and international scope, and on the promotion of the peaceful solution of conflicts and disarmament as a basic principle of its foreign policy.

Costa Rica's achievements in the national and international arena are attributable to our sound decision, made more than 50 years ago, to abolish our army as this has enabled us to devote more resources to social investment, to renounce weapons and to promote democracy and development.

Given that Costa Rica's efforts to promote the security and well-being of the country's society are largely linked to the development of international law and the effectiveness of the protection which it provides, we deem it essential that we are properly represented in these forums.

Where international law prevails, the risk of war are reduced and we therefore consider it necessary to continue preparing effective verification mechanisms that guarantee that there is no use, threat of use or manufacture of weapons of mass destruction.

In the light of all that I have said, Costa Rica reiterates once more its request to be admitted to the Conference on Disarmament.

Over the last 50 years Costa Rica has not spent any money on an army and has devoted its budget to education, preventive health-care and infrastructure investment. Our national experience has taught us that to decide not to invest in weapons is the best way forward for those countries that are really committed to the well-being of their peoples. We believe that the promotion of peace and security, both internationally and on the domestic front, is contingent upon a determined policy to reduce military expenditure and to strengthen civil power. It stands to reason that disarmament, demilitarization and the reduction of military expenditure are essential for the welfare of mankind and the promotion of a culture of peace.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Costa Rica for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Vasily Sidorov.

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): First, may I thank you for giving me the floor and congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I wish you every success and assure you of my delegation's willingness to cooperate in the most constructive manner. I would also like to welcome those new colleagues who have recently joined us in our work in the Conference.

At the Millennium Summit, held recently in New York, attention was given to an issue of particular importance to the modern age: what system of international relations will prevail over our lives and activities in the twenty-first century?

We believe that the new age should be one of equal security and a just peace, as stated by President Putin of Russia in his speech at the Summit: "The new age for the United Nations must continue well into a millennium of global stability. It must go down in history as a period of real disarmament. It has already proved possible to create an efficient disarmament machinery. That machinery comprises the 1972 ABM Treaty, non-proliferation regimes governing weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and dozens of highly important agreements on the reduction and limitation of various weapons."

I have already had ample occasion in this auditorium to state the abiding significance of the ABM Treaty for strategic stability and international security. The issue has recently been raised again, more than once, in plenary meetings of the Conference on Disarmament and points have been made which require clarification on our part.

We are firmly convinced that the ABM Treaty remains the cornerstone for strategic stability and that it continues to serve as a basis for ensuring further reductions in strategic offensive arms. We believe that this linkage will be further strengthened in the foreseeable future. Incidentally, it was the United States which was the first to raise the issue of a connection between agreements to reduce and limit strategic offensive arms and the ABM Treaty. On 9 May 1972, during the final stage of preparations for the ABM Treaty, Ambassador Smith of the United States of America made a statement to the effect that the United States reserved the right to withdraw from the Treaty unless the START agreement was concluded within five years.

The significance and historic role of the ABM Treaty are not confined merely to the sphere of Russian-United States relations. It underpins the entire modern system of arms control agreements and the collapse of the ABM Treaty would therefore disrupt the whole range of disarmament agreements created over the last 30 years. There is an increasing threat of the erosion of the regimes of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The creation and deployment of the United States national missile defence system would give powerful impetus to the proliferation of missiles and missile technology. The positions of many countries on nuclear disarmament would shift and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons would fall victim to these developments.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

Those who oppose the idea of preserving the ABM Treaty in its present shape often say that nothing would happen if it were to be slightly amended and adjusted to current realities, particularly since corrections have already been made to it before. Let us look more closely at this argument.

It is true that the 1972 ABM Treaty does make allowance for the possibility of changing its provisions and the parties to the Treaty have made use of that possibility in the past. The intent of those changes was to strengthen the Treaty's regime and to enhance its "restraining" elements. Today, however, it is suggested that we amend this instrument so as to accommodate the deployment of a "limited" anti-missile defence system for a national territory. This is contrary to the core provisions of article 1, which constitute the very essence of the ABM Treaty. In other words, what is being suggested is that the ABM Treaty be changed from one which prohibits the creation of national missile defence systems to one which actually provides for the creation of such systems, its very opposite. Such a change in the Treaty would set a precedent in disarmament practice whereby the introduction of additions or amendments to an agreement limiting and restraining the development of an advanced weapon could turn it into an agreement which actually permits military build-up. We cannot accept this sort of logic.

The announcement by President Clinton of the United States that he would not enter into any commitment to deploy a national missile defence system is seen in Russia as a well-considered and responsible decision. As President Putin stresses, however: "This does mean that Washington and Moscow now share completely identical approaches to the issue of ABM".

We cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that programmes are still under way to set up a national missile defence system in the United States of America. No one has repealed the National Missile Defence Act adopted in the United States in 1999. According to our analysis it is difficult to conceive of a United States national missile defence system which would not impair Russia's deterrent potential and yet would still fall within the limits of the ABM Treaty. Among the implications of creating any United States national missile defence system would be the disruption of the prevailing strategic stability and the devaluation - to some extent or other - of Russia's strategic capability. It would also ensure the unilateral military superiority of the United States of America. In these circumstances, assurances by the United States that it is committed to the ABM Treaty, that its national missile defence system is supposedly not directed against Russia and that it stands ready to pursue "trade-off" cooperation with Russia in the area of ABM cannot allay our fears.

We are not shirking dialogue with the United States of America. This does not, however, imply any consent whatsoever on our part to adapting the ABM Treaty to accommodate the United States national missile defence system. Our position is dictated by the best interests of strengthening peace and international stability. We do not intend to change our approach. Our message to our United States partners is clear and plain: we will not participate in the destruction of this fundamental instrument - for this, effectively, is what is at stake.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

Russia is ready to continue active joint efforts both with the United States of America and with other interested States to ensure international security, including through prompt progress towards agreements on further reducing nuclear arsenals, improving the regimes for nuclear and missile non-proliferation and strengthening strategic stability by political means. We recently ratified the START II Treaty, the 1997 New York package of START and ABM-related agreements and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. We are now awaiting reciprocal steps by the United States of America. We advocate the immediate start of negotiations on START III. During the Okinawa summit, President Putin submitted to President Clinton detailed proposals regarding the main areas of the START III negotiations. These are based on our belief that the conclusion of a START III Treaty is only possible if the ABM Treaty remains inviolate.

Let us now try to respond to the arguments of those advocates of amending the ABM Treaty who invoke the changed strategic situation and the increased missile threats.

We consider that references to such a threat have no real foundation. The deployment of a United States national missile defence system is motivated by the necessity to counter the strategic ballistic missiles of certain countries. However, the proliferation of such ballistic missiles is not expected to occur either today or in the foreseeable future. The changes in the strategic situation cited by the proponents of amendments to the ABM Treaty are in no way comparable to the changes in the strategic situation that could occur if the Treaty were to be undermined and the disarmament process destroyed.

We are convinced that the issue of missile proliferation can and must be dealt with without disrupting the ABM Treaty. Instead of the military solution to the issue, we suggest a constructive approach, through political and diplomatic measures. We are ready to engage in the broadest possible consultations on the whole range of missile non-proliferation issues with all interested countries. Furthermore, as you are aware, initial results are already available from work with those countries mentioned by the United States as posing a missile threat.

We are satisfied that the United States has started to give positive consideration to Russia's ideas concerning the creation of a global missile and missile technology non-proliferation control system. It is significant that the joint Russian-United States statements on the outcome of the recent meetings between the presidents of the two countries in Okinawa and in New York registered their readiness for joint action to resolve the issue of missile proliferation, including the implementation of Russia's proposals for a global control system.

The role of the ABM Treaty goes well beyond arrangements among the narrow circle of States to which it is formally confined. This was clearly demonstrated by the results of the vote at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly on the resolution on the preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty, which was put forward by Russia jointly with Belarus and China. We see these results as endorsement of our efforts to enhance the effectiveness and authority of that Treaty.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

Any country's attempt to strengthen its own security at the expense of that of others is doomed to failure, as history has shown. The collapse of the ABM Treaty and the consequent collapse of all the other nuclear disarmament treaties based on it would undoubtedly cause many States to reconsider their priorities and methods for ensuring security. In this regard, the resolution adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly sends an unmistakably clear message to those seeking to disrupt the ABM Treaty.

We plan to submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly at its current session in support for the ABM Treaty. The text of the draft, which is virtually identical to that of last year's resolution, was circulated a few days ago to all delegations here in Geneva.

The draft is not confrontational. It is based on the language of the Treaty itself and on the joint statements on the issue by the Presidents of Russia and the United States of America. It is not directed against any country, nor does it prejudice anyone's interests. Its purpose is clear and entirely constructive: to ensure that, through rigorous and full compliance with the ABM Treaty, the Treaty is preserved and strengthened.

Adoption by the General Assembly at its current session of the draft resolution on the preservation of the ABM Treaty would send a new signal to the international community on the importance of ensuring the viability of this Treaty. We expect our draft to receive broad support from the international community.

The task of preserving the ABM Treaty under current conditions is closely related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, another issue that has been entrusted to our Conference. The ABM Treaty prohibits the development, testing or deployment in outer space of missile defence components. Application of its regime will keep outer space free of an entire class of space weapons - anti-missile weapons. We are firmly convinced that the preservation of this agreement will constitute a major obstacle to any possible escalation of the arms race, both here on Earth and in outer space.

We share the view of those delegations who consider that the elaboration at this early stage of specific measures to prevent an arms race in outer space will help obviate the enormous costs involved in disarming space in the future. In this context, I would like to draw the attention of the participants here in the Conference on Disarmament to the proposal made by President Putin at the Millennium Summit, that an international conference on the prevention of demilitarization of outer space should be convened in Moscow in spring 2001 under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Russian Federation supports the re-establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space with the mandate to elaborate specific practical arrangements which will prevent near-Earth space from being transformed into a new arena for confrontation between the great Powers.

As we see it, the international community should set as one of its priorities the earliest possible elaboration of an international legal regime prohibiting the introduction in outer space

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

of other weapons besides weapons of mass destruction, primarily strike weapons. At the same time, it is our firm view that the work of the Conference on Disarmament on outer space issues should not obstruct the peaceful exploration of outer space.

I should like to reaffirm that we look favourably on the groundwork being carried out by Canada on the non-weaponization of outer space, the French ideas for a notification regime for launches of space objects and ballistic missiles and other proposals by participants in the Conference which could serve as a basis for substantive discussion.

In concluding my statement, I would like to cite the words of President Putin at the Millennium Summit, "I am convinced that by building upon a just world order and strategic stability, we shall ensure sustainable development for civilization. The Russia of today is, as never before, open, responsible and ready for cooperation on the basis of equal partnership."

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. BENFREHA (Algeria) (translated from French): I thank you, Mr. President, for all the efforts you are making and for the way in which you are conducting our work. I also must pay particular tribute to Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, for the work he has done in the Conference.

I have the honour, on behalf of the Group of 21, to make the following statement, which I shall deliver in English:

(continued in English)

As the 2000 session of the Conference on Disarmament draws to a close, the Group of 21 regrets that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, has once again been unable to agree on a programme of work during its current session.

This failure is primarily due to the continued inflexibility of some of the nuclear-weapon States regarding negotiations on nuclear disarmament and on measures to prevent an arms race in outer space.

The Group of 21 emphasizes that nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority for the Conference on Disarmament and stresses the necessity of establishing in the Conference an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament under agenda item 1. In this regard, the Group invites the Conference's attention to its proposals contained in CD/1570, CD/1571 and CD/1549 and to the statement made by the coordinator of the Group on 27 January 2000.

The Group emphasizes that outer space is the common heritage of humankind. In this regard, the prevention of an arms race in outer space has assumed greater urgency because of

(Mr. Benfreha, Algeria)

legitimate concerns that existing legal instruments are inadequate to deter imminent attempts aimed at the further militarization of outer space and its possible weaponization. In accordance with resolution 54/53 of the United Nations General Assembly, the Group emphasizes the urgent need for commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In this connection, the Group calls upon the States parties to the ABM Treaty to comply fully with its provisions.

The Group of 21 reaffirms its flexibility and readiness to continue to contribute constructively and extends its full support to the efforts of the President of the Conference. The Group of 21 urges other groups to display matching flexibility so that substantive work can commence early next year within the framework of a programme of work which reflects the priorities and interests of all delegations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this point? I give the floor to Ambassador Hu of China.

Mr. HU XIAODI (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, I have listened attentively to the previous speakers. Last week I took the floor to convey, yet again, the views of the Chinese delegation on national missile defence and the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to take this opportunity to present further views on these two issues.

First, with regard to national missile defence, the reason advanced for developing and employing such systems is defence against the missile threat posed by certain so-called "countries of concern". It is manifest to all, however, that those countries, given their military capacity and technology and their overall national strength, simply are not in a position to pose any military threat in the foreseeable future to the militarily most powerful country in the world. They are even less likely to pose any threat of missile-borne weapons of mass destruction. Still more important is the lack of motive. No small country would ever attack or threaten to attack the militarily most powerful country in the world with missile-borne weapons of mass destruction, unless it had decided to commit suicide. For that reason, attributing the need to develop and deploy a national missile defence system to the missile threat posed by so-called "countries of concern" is far from convincing. It is only a clumsy pretext.

International arms control, disarmament and security treaties concluded in the past are not necessarily unamendable in the light of new circumstances. Any amendment ought, however, to promote the purpose and objective of the treaty concerned, namely, international peace and security. If the effect of an amendment is to undermine the treaty's purpose and objective and to jeopardize international peace and security it must be rejected and opposed. The attempt to amend the ABM Treaty to allow the deployment of national missile defence systems is precisely such a case.

It is an incontestable fact that the country possessing the world's most sophisticated space technology is busy pursuing its plan to develop space weapons. The memory of the "Star Wars"

(Mr. Hu Xiaodi, China)

programme of the 1980s remains fresh in our mind. The long-range plan to develop a space military strategy, drawn up in April 1998, is also no secret. It explicitly states that military space capabilities will become a major factor in ensuring that country's national security and implementing its military strategies and that the primary task of its space force in the twenty-first century is to seek superiority in space. For that purpose, the space command of that country has promoted such operational concepts as securing control of space and global engagement. This is the background against which the development of space weapons has been stepped up, with the national missile defence programme as part of the overall effort.

Space systems are an important component of the national missile defence programme. Space will also become the battlefield for national missile defence. The national missile defence system currently being developed is only the first stage in the overall national missile defence plan. More advanced national missile defence systems will follow; even more weapon systems will be deployed in outer space. The danger of the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space is therefore very real. It is essential for the international community to negotiate now an international treaty to prevent the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space.

With regard to the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament, to date the Conference has been unable to carry out any substantive work for two consecutive years. This is a matter of profound concern to China and it earnestly hopes that the Conference will be able to break the impasse as soon as possible.

As everyone can see, the impasse is caused by the different parties taking different items of the Conference's agenda as their top priority.

Is there any way out of this impasse? In my opinion, the answer is yes. What we need to do is to take the concerns of all sides into consideration in a comprehensive and balanced way and set up ad hoc committees with negotiating mandates on the priority items of all sides. That is the only approach that will bring a solution that is genuine and fair without favouring any side, and therefore realistic and workable.

We will never reach consensus on the work programme and break the impasse if any one delegation insists on negotiating only on its own priority items and will not permit negotiations on the priority items of other parties. Regrettably, some delegations are persisting in this, which has thus far kept the Conference on Disarmament from establishing any working mechanism, including ad hoc committees, on nuclear disarmament and outer space and prevented it from carrying out any substantive work.

China advocates the establishment of an ad hoc committee on outer space, to negotiate a legal instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space. I have already had occasion, last week and many times before, to elaborate on our reasons for this. China's position on nuclear disarmament is consistent. We support the position of the Group of 21 with regard to the establishment of an ad hoc committee to conduct negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Hu Xiaodi, China)

Although negotiations on FMCT are not a priority item for us, China does not oppose such negotiations. However, in view of certain negative developments, including the setback of CTBT and, in particular, the ongoing national missile defence programme, any formula would be unacceptable to us if it led only to negotiations on FMCT, without also leading to negotiations on outer space.

It is clear that there are two possible approaches. One is that advocated by China, namely, to launch negotiations on the priority items of all parties. The other approach is to negotiate only on the priority of one country and not to permit negotiations on the priorities of others. China's approach, if acceptable to all, could certainly lead to consensus on the Conference's work programme. By contrast, the other approach, if accepted by all, could never lead the Conference out of its impasse.

It is the hope of the Chinese delegation that in the future all sides will treat each other equally and deal with issues in a just and fair way, rather than attending only to their own interests at the expense of the interests of the majority of other countries.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the Chinese delegation would like to convey its appreciation for your continued efforts to find a good solution to the problem of the work programme and for your guidance in preparing the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament and the draft General Assembly resolution. We are also grateful to the distinguished Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference and to all the staff of the secretariat and of the Conference Support Branch for the enormous help they have given us in our work.

Mr. MAIMESKUL (Ukraine) (translated from French): Mr. President, you still have New York and the General Assembly ahead of you, so let me take this opportunity to wish you every success in your mission. I would like in particular to thank you for your kind words to me. You will recall that, at the height of Ukraine's presidency two years ago, it was my privilege to welcome you to Geneva.

Two years ago, we were able to overcome the difficulties, uncertainties and, on occasion, opposition which faced us and we resolved to move forward. Notwithstanding the difficult times which the Conference is currently experiencing, I believe in its potential and its future. As was said one and a half years ago by Ambassador Joëlle Bourgois of France, the very existence of the Conference on Disarmament is a confidence-building measure which nothing can ever replace. All we need now is a result.

Before concluding, Sir, I would like to thank all my colleagues for their cooperation and to bid them all farewell for now, but not for ever. I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky. I thank you, Mr. Bensmail, for having so generously shared your unique experience with the Ukrainian delegation, particularly during our tenure as President. I thank the whole team of the Conference secretariat for their readiness to help, their kind consideration and their counsel.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Ukraine for the kind words addressed to the Chair and for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Ecuador.

Mr. BETANCOURT RUALES (Ecuador) (translated from Spanish): Thank you, Mr. President. For me it is a great honour to speak to the distinguished members of this important forum, as I begin my term of office in the area of disarmament as head of the delegation of Ecuador.

I thank you for your kind words of welcome, which commit me not only to the primary objectives of this Conference but also to continued cooperation in the essential work that all Governments are carrying out to maintain international peace and security.

For these reasons, Sir, I must express my gratitude for all the efforts made by your predecessors and, in particular, my full support for your own efforts as President.

In my view, the Conference on Disarmament has as its purpose the coordination of all political aspirations on multilateral issues related to peace, with particular emphasis on disarmament, and progress towards a new, positive climate in international security.

The uncertainties and the challenges that this Conference has come up against in recent years may eventually be dispelled if all members heed the call of the international community by cooperating more closely and striving, for example, for consensus on a necessary programme of work for the Conference.

Ecuador associates itself with those countries which have stated that this Conference must not shirk its responsibility any longer. It must begin the new millennium with an agenda that will safeguard the process of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, an agenda that will be very clear and inspire hope in all humankind. Ecuador believes that nuclear disarmament is a priority of the international community; at the same time disarmament is one of the greatest challenges of our times, and one that we must overcome as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Ecuador for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. SOOD (India): Mr. President, I have sought the floor to thank you for your warm words of welcome to me this morning. I would also like to convey my appreciation for the many friendly faces that I see around this room as I return to this chamber after an absence of almost 11 years. I look forward very much to working with all my colleagues here and I am quite sure that we should be able to move things forward in the months to come, as we have under your presidency this month.

I would like to add that we are aware of the fact that, for the last couple of years, we have not seen active negotiations taking place in the Conference on Disarmament, but nonetheless, the

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fact that my Government has chosen this moment to appoint me here as head of the Indian delegation to the Conference on Disarmament is a reflection of India's deep commitment to multilateral negotiations and of its awareness of the importance of multilateral negotiations in disarmament and the unique position that this particular institution has in this field.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America. Ambassador Grey, you have the floor.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): I regret that the distinguished representative of China has seen fit again to misrepresent the plans and intentions of the United States. In my view, these misrepresentations become less persuasive with each repetition.

When I spoke on 31 August and 14 September, I addressed these questions in considerable depth. It would be a disservice to the Conference and disrespectful to those here present for me to repeat the same comprehensive answers I have already given, so I shall refrain from doing so today. But I will note that the way to get the Conference on Disarmament back to work is to move along the lines suggested by three past presidents, the ambassadors of Algeria, Belgium and Brazil. My delegation is prepared to proceed in this direction and, I would remind you, so too are the vast majority of the Conference's members.

The PRESIDENT: That concludes the list of speakers that I have for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

I will then invite you to formalize the provisional agreements reached at the informal plenary meeting on the draft annual report, as contained in document CD/WP.511, together with the revisions contained in document CD/WP.512. Since we were able to go through the draft annual report, paragraph by paragraph, at the informal plenary meeting held last Thursday, and since we have gone through the revisions contained in CD/WP.512 earlier this morning, I shall now proceed to the formal adoption of our annual report as a whole as revised.

May I take it that the annual report in its entirety, as contained in document CD/WP.511 and as revised in CD/WP.512, is adopted?

It is so decided.

The secretariat will issue the report as an official document of the Conference in all official languages as soon as feasible.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

I should like to inform the Conference that, as Cameroon has notified the secretariat that it will not be in a position to preside over the Conference from 1 January 2001, as provided for in rule 9 of the rules of procedure, the representatives of the following member States will preside

(The President)

over the Conference in 2001: Canada from 1 January to 18 February; Chile from 19 February to 18 March; China from 19 March to 27 May; Colombia from 28 May to 24 June; Cuba from 25 June to 19 August; and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from 20 August to 31 December 2001.

I would now like to give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, who wishes to make a brief statement.

Mr. BENSMAIL (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament) (translated from French): Mr. President, dear friends, as you know, I am about to leave my position as Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and as Director of the Geneva Branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs. I therefore wish to take advantage of this last plenary of the 2000 session to take my leave of you all and briefly to share a few personal reflections with you. Let me reassure you at the very outset: I do not intend to apply the tacit rule in the Conference that the length of a valedictory statement should be one page per year of service with the Conference. I certainly do not intend to inflict a 20-page statement on you, nor do I intend to abide by the ritual but perilous exercise of drawing definitive conclusions on the future of the Conference. Others have done that before me and with greater authority, so I will merely make a few comments inspired by the long experience I have gathered in this forum.

It is my great privilege to have been associated with the Conference on Disarmament since its very beginnings, following the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in June 1978. I was a member of the Algerian delegation which had the honour of being the first to preside over the Conference in January 1979 and thus helping to do the groundwork for its future work.

My move from the Algerian diplomatic service to the secretariat here in March 1980 was thus a natural progression, because in fact I continued to deal with the same subjects, albeit from a different standpoint, since in that new office I was no longer defending the position of my Government but serving the interests of all delegations and working to seek consensus. The move was not an easy one but the counsel which I received from my superiors was of great assistance to me at the time. When one day I asked the first Secretary-General of the Conference, the late Ricki Jaipal, what the golden rule was for the secretariat, he said: "The secretariat should be seen and not heard." I think I can say that I have scrupulously stuck to that rule throughout my service, except for one particular occasion when there was an attempt to question the secretariat's integrity.

Thus, I was present at the birth of this institution. I witnessed the immense hopes surrounding it, that it would help rid the world of the threat of weapons of mass destruction and help create an international community determined to reduce conventional weapons to levels compatible with the preservation of national security. I observed its hesitant steps as it tried to forge consensus on priorities for negotiation. I also lived through the Conference's hours of

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glory, as it conducted the negotiations which led to the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1992 and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty in 1996, to which processes I made my own modest contribution. And, finally, I have shared your frustration at the Conference's inability to embark on substantive work on its agenda items.

(continued in English)

The ongoing debate on the role of the Conference in the field of multilateral disarmament diplomacy in the current international security environment is legitimate and necessary. In this connection, it should be recalled that periods of inactivity and deadlock have occurred before in the framework of the predecessors of the Conference on Disarmament, namely, the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament, the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. I remember the days when questions were raised as to whether there was a life for the Conference on Disarmament after the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention. These questions were, as I recall, answered with the decision of the Conference to negotiate the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.

Similar questions are being asked now. Can the Conference overcome the impasse it currently faces, following the indefinite extension of the NPT and the conclusion of the CTBT? Are we witnessing the emergence of a new model for arms control and disarmament with the "Ottawa process", which led to the agreement on a convention to ban landmines? Can this experience be repeated in other fields of arms control and disarmament? Are diplomatic conferences convened through a coalition of like-minded Governments and non-governmental organizations, as a substitute for genuine multilateral negotiations, which are the only negotiations that can ensure universal adherence to treaties and their effective implementation? The debate on all these questions is not over and is unlikely to be conclusive for the simple reason that the nature of the issues to be addressed in the field of arms control and disarmament, their complexity and magnitude, require that all possible avenues, whether bilateral, regional or global, are fully explored and used.

The current deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament has been and continues to be the subject of various interpretations. While it is recognized that the Conference, as an institution, has served the international community well in the past, and that its potential for other multilateral negotiations remains intact, the prolongation of this stalemate is a source of concern to all.

The Conference's value cannot, and should not, be reduced to a simple accounting of the number of treaties it produces. The situation it faces can be largely attributed to a fundamental divergence of views on the wider question of what is the international disarmament agenda after the end of the cold war, the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. In particular, it relates to the requirement to strike the right balance between the preservation and

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consolidation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the need to accelerate and multilateralize the nuclear disarmament process, while at the same time preserving and enhancing strategic stability.

Preparing the ground for future negotiations through discussions and technical work is a prerequisite for the start of genuine negotiations. All major negotiations have been preceded by a pre-negotiation stage, in which some shared understanding is reached that a security problem exists and that it must be addressed multilaterally. This process may be arduous and time-consuming, but it provides the guarantee that the end-product, that is to say, treaty-making, is based on solid foundations which take into account the security concerns of all and therefore ensures the universality and effectiveness of the agreements reached. What is required is a common willingness of all the membership of the Conference, making full use of its in-built flexibility and recognized expertise, to develop a workable and balanced programme of work which takes into account the priorities and concerns of all.

Multilateral disarmament forums have always evolved over the years in response to changed political realities. The Conference on Disarmament is no exception in this respect, and the difficulties it now faces are not due to what is perceived by some as the rigidity of its rules of procedure, of its working methods and the group system. They are rather a reflection of the complexity and the dynamics of contemporary international relations, and therefore all efforts should focus on the creation of a political climate conducive to the full use of the Conference as a negotiating forum, in particular on the restoration of a minimum harmony among the major players.

(continued in French)

I realize that I have strayed somewhat from my intention not to embark on serious political comment, but I am sure that you will not hold that against me.

My long association with the Conference on Disarmament has been a valuable experience for me at all levels, personal, political, intellectual and cultural. The friendship and trust that you and your predecessors have always shown towards me has really made things very much easier for me and I am grateful to you for that. I would not want to conclude these comments without conveying my sincere thanks to the whole team which has given me such valuable assistance in carrying out my duties over all these years: Hannelore Hoppe, Silvana da Silva, Vladimir Bogomolov, Jerzy Zaleski, Sonia Koppe, Alexandre Golay, Yvonne Santa Eugenia, Charlotte Laut Hernández, Cheryl Darby, Annette Ekberg, Lynne Hardewall and Saïd Zoughy were skilful, devoted colleagues, always ready to help and to put up with my Mediterranean character. And, finally, my thanks go to the interpreters, whom we so often put through the mill and who have always responded courteously to the sometimes unreasonable demands placed on them by the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Bensmail for his profound and enlightening statement. Would any delegation like to take the floor at this point? I see the representative of France. Ambassador de La Fortelle, you have the floor.

Mr. de La FORTELLE (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, my dear colleagues, the interpreters, ladies and gentlemen, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Abdelkader Bensmail, has just given us some sad news today: for him this will be the last plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Fortunately, he will be accompanying many of us to New York to follow the work of the First Committee and will take his retirement thereafter.

It is with great sadness that we will see him leave after a long career that has taken place, if I may say so, on both sides of the looking-glass: first, as a diplomat representing Algeria, and then as an international official in the United Nations.

At the risk of offending his well-known modesty, I will recall the major stages of his university, professional and family life which have made of him both a great Algerian and a great Frenchman.

Abdelkader Bensmail attained outstanding academic success in my country. He has a postgraduate degree in English and degrees from the Toulouse Institute of Political Studies and the Institute for Foreign Affairs in Paris. With such fine qualifications, a career in international affairs was unavoidable and it is indeed that career that he chose.

Abdelkader Bensmail began his career in the Algerian diplomatic service and served his country with distinction. As he has recalled to us, he became an international civil servant with the United Nations first in New York, in the International Affairs Department, and then in Geneva in the Conference on Disarmament. In October 1993, the Secretary-General of the United Nations appointed him to the post of Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and head of the Geneva Branch of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament Affairs. As you can see, at the end of a career both varied and full, his outstanding merits have always received due appreciation and positions of high responsibility have been conferred upon him, in particular, the post which he has held for the last seven years here in Geneva.

Abdelkader Bensmail has always acted in a manner both effective and discreet. He has rarely taken the floor, and he has told us why, but his advice was always valuable, particularly for us. As he departs, he will be taking with him the memory of the Conference. We could always turn to him to learn of those ever useful precedents. My predecessors were able to appreciate his many qualities during both the negotiations of the Convention on Chemical Weapons and those of the CTBT, and I believe I speak for all of us when I say that we will all miss him in the time to come, as he enjoys his well-deserved retirement.

It remains only for me to convey my very best wishes to the Deputy Secretary-General and to hope that he enjoys happiness and the best of health in his new life.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France for his statement. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? I see the representative of Egypt. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Ms. ABOUNAGA (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, since I come from the same region as Mr. Bensmail, might I be allowed through you to say these few words to him? On behalf of the Egyptian delegation, I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, who unfortunately is leaving us today to enjoy what I am sure will be a better life after his official duties and after all the dedicated services that he has rendered, for almost a quarter of a century, to his country, Algeria, and in furtherance of the aims of the Conference on Disarmament and the programmes and agenda for disarmament in general. As we and previous representatives of our countries to this Conference can testify, these services were rendered over the years in a highly competent manner. They were made possible by virtue of his commendable personal qualities, which he described, very modestly, as being possibly attributable to his Mediterranean character. They certainly turned him into a team leader who has worked with a great deal of skill and efficiency. Today we bid him farewell, but only here in the Conference, and may I personally, on behalf of the Egyptian delegation, wish him every success in his future life. I am quite sure that, in mind, thought and spirit, he will not abandon the Conference on Disarmament or the objectives of disarmament and that he will always remain very close to us here in the Conference. I wish him all the best and reiterate my sincere gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the Egyptian delegation. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT: I now give the floor to China. You have the floor, Ambassador Hu.

Mr. HU XIAODI (China) (translated from Chinese): Thank you, Mr. President. Like the two previous speakers, I shall also deeply regret the impending retirement from office of our Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Bensmail. With his outstanding diplomatic skill and rich work experience, Mr. Bensmail has over the course of many years performed a great deal of valuable work for our Conference on Disarmament, and has rendered enormous assistance to all the delegations, for which he has earned the highest praise. In fact, since the very foundation of the Conference and throughout his work with this forum, he has served as a veritable living encyclopaedia of all the issues relating to the Conference on Disarmament. The statement which he has just delivered is full of wisdom and merits our deep consideration. Without question, his departure will be a loss both to the Conference on Disarmament and to us all. On behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to express our wholehearted appreciation for all the help that he has given us over all the years since we first joined the Conference on Disarmament. I also sincerely wish him every success for his future.

The PRESIDENT: I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. BENFREHA (Algeria) (translated from French): As a fellow countryman, it is incumbent on me, on behalf of my country, to pay special tribute to Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for the quality of the work he has performed here in the Conference on Disarmament and, at the same time, to extol the efforts he has made since the establishment of this multilateral forum to instil in it a spirit of consensus.

We see in Mr. Bensmail a consummate product of the Algerian diplomatic service, the service in which he embarked on his professional career. His exemplary approach to his work was forged in this school of diplomacy, which has always advocated the attainment of consensus in dealing with key issues of disarmament, in the interest of peace and international security.

I would also like to associate myself with the eloquent praise expressed by those speaking before me for Mr. Bensmail's outstanding qualities and to give him my best wishes for his retirement.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Algeria for his comments. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I see the representative of India.

Mr. SOOD (India): It is perhaps somewhat presumptuous for a person who has just joined the Conference on Disarmament to seek the floor twice on his very first day in this forum, but this is a rather special day, and I exercise this privilege as one of the people who have known Kader since 1986. It is both strange and somehow special that, as I attend my first plenary in this new appointment, it also happens to be Kader's last plenary in his present appointment.

Many people around this table have spoken about his professional skills, but what I would like first to single out in this enormously rewarding relationship, my personal relationship with Kader, are his generosity with his time, which he so willingly shared with me when I came here for the first time in 1986, knowing very little about multilateral work and even less about disarmament, and the ease with which we could rely on him to give us the history and the background of issues and to educate us in the niceties of multilateral work. And second I recall his warm hospitality, which I have enjoyed on more than one occasion. The last memorable such occasion was the farewell dinner given in my own honour at his house in 1989.

When I was appointed here, one of the things I looked forward to was the chance to resume this close contact, which we had kept up over the years, but within obvious limits, given that we were in different cities.

All the same, I am glad that I have been present today at your last plenary meeting in this appointment. I would like to wish you the best of luck and good health, happiness and contentment.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. SUL (Republic of Korea): Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. Please be assured of my delegation's full support in carrying out your noble endeavours. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference, and to the staff of the secretariat for their excellent job in providing conference services.

I have asked for the floor today on behalf of the members of the Western Group to express our regret and deep sadness over Mr. Bensmail's departure. It is very difficult for me to add anything to the eloquent tributes already paid to Mr. Bensmail this morning. I would like to say, however, how much we have benefited from his vast knowledge and experience in disarmament negotiations, his diplomatic skills and the managerial proficiency which he brought to the Conference. Mr. Bensmail assumed many roles, sometimes as an untiring negotiator, sometimes as a diligent provider of a good and constructive atmosphere for the work of the Conference.

His charming personality and engaging character have constantly stimulated the work of the Conference. He was a good friend of the Western Group and, I am sure, of all the delegations to the Conference on Disarmament. We all agree that, with his years of experience and dedication, Mr. Bensmail has become a "walking library" of the Conference, given his extensive knowledge not only of all those complicated procedural issues but also of many aspects never recorded in any document. How reassuring it was to know that we could always count on Mr. Bensmail effortlessly to solve what seemed to us unfathomable mysteries.

The Western Group expresses its most sincere gratitude to Mr. Bensmail for his dedication and outstanding professionalism. We will miss him very much, but I find consolation in a Korean proverb which wisely says that, while those who meet are destined to part, those who part are destined to meet again.

We wish him all the best, continued good health and happiness.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. HORUMBA (Romania): Mr. President, speaking on behalf of the Eastern European Group, I would like wholeheartedly to endorse the kind words of appreciation addressed by previous speakers to Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail.

The Eastern European Group would also like to thank Mr. Bensmail for his efforts in the important office of Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and to commend him on his long-standing experience and expertise in the field of multilateral disarmament, his diplomatic skills and the managerial competence he has displayed in the activities of our unique international body.

(Mr. Horumba, Romania)

As we bid farewell to Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, we wish him every success in the years ahead, long health and prosperity, as well as personal happiness.

The PRESIDENT: As I see no other speakers, I shall proceed with some short closing remarks.

In my opening remarks I identified two principal objectives in my work as the last presiding officer of the 2000 session of the Conference on Disarmament: to continue the efforts towards finding a compromise on the programme or work and to facilitate the adoption of the Conference's report to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The second task has just been accomplished, and I am grateful to all delegations for the assistance and the collaboration that have made this possible. I believe that the report which we have adopted is factual and accurate in accounting for the Conference's activities in the year 2000.

With regard to the first task, I am compelled to conclude today, on behalf of this Conference, that we have spent yet another session mostly on trying to pre-negotiate the conditions for our possible future negotiations on the different topics of our agenda, upon which we happen to agree. My consultations to date have confirmed that we are still short of a compromise on a programme of work for the Conference. While there is a broad measure of agreement on most of the elements for such a programme, there are two issues, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, that have still to be tackled further. In addition, to be able to agree about anything in the programe of work, it seems that first we have to agree about everything. There were times when the situation seemed so serious that, as the saying goes, we could only joke about it. It is clear that we have before us a tall order and there should be nothing exceptional about the fact that it is taking us so long to perform.

That having been said, these past four weeks I have also become aware of a number of promising signs in the Conference on Disarmament. Of the two outstanding issues on our draft programme of work, our positions on nuclear disarmament seem to be a little closer to convergence today than they were about a year ago. In addition, most of the delegations with which I have had meetings share the same concern and similar perceptions with regard to the delicate stage at which we find ourselves in the Conference on Disarmament. The positive attitude of all members in preparing our annual report to the General Assembly, as well as the contents of that report, are also testimony to the good will prevailing in the Conference for our endeavour to surmount the hurdles that face us.

Our joint efforts brought about an encouraging development in our report CD/1624, as the accumulation of new constructive ideas expressed in the Conference during the current and previous years. The report that we adopted delivers a forward-looking recommendation to me and to my successor to conduct intensive consultations during the inter-sessional period on the basis of the progress that has already been achieved. I intend those consultations to be open,

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pragmatic and cooperative, with the sole objective of preparing a good beginning for the 2001 session. All in all, provided we are able to demonstrate the necessary political will, we may well be just a couple of critical steps away from the desired compromise and the start of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament.

As in a long-distance race, the last few steps often prove to be the most difficult. But I believe that these steps will not be impossible to make; we are, after all, carrying the baton forward into the next millennium (please forgive the cliché, but desperate times call for desperate metaphors). At this threshold in time, we the peoples are striving for a safer world, based on development and disarmament. We the peoples prefer to compete in sporting competition, rather than arms races. Our heads of State and Government exercised their political will in resolving, earlier this month, to share the responsibility for international peace and security, assigning special significance to disarmament, amongst other areas. The Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum in its field, has a unique role to play in delivering on this commitment.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who today had to attend a memorial service and unfortunately could not be with us; to all the members of the secretariat for their efficiency and valuable advice; to the interpreters, for their patience and dedication; and to all delegations for their cooperation and understanding.

Today is also a special occasion for us. It is my honour and my privilege to pay tribute, on behalf of all the members of this Conference, to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, who will be retiring later this year. Mr. Bensmail has had an illustrious diplomatic career, the last 20 and more years of which have been devoted to the Conference on Disarmament and to disarmament in general. His expert guidance and professional competence have been emblematic of the work of the secretariat and will remain as an example to follow. He is what I would call the "living history" of this Conference, and I can only hope that some day he will put it all down on paper.

Mr. Bensmail, your experience and outstanding contribution will be greatly missed by us all. We wish you and your family good health, good luck and continued success.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 23 January 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.